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University of Michigan – BUHR

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES,

IN

PROSE,

BY

JOHN AIKIN, M.D.

AND

ANNA LÆTITIA BARBAULD.

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ON THE

PROVINCE

OF

COMEDY.

VARIOUS are the methods which art and ingenuity have invented to exhibit a picture of human life and manners. Theſe have differed from each other, both in the mode of repreſentation, and in the particular view of the ſubject which has been taken. With reſpect to the firſt, it is univerſally allowed that the dramatic form is by far the moſt perfect. The circumſtance of

leaving every character to diſplay itſelf in its own proper language, with all the variations of tone and geſture which diſtinguiſh it from others, and which mark every emotion of the mind; and the ſcenic deluſions of dreſs, painting, and machinery, contribute to ſtamp ſuch an appearance of reality upon dramatic repreſentations as no other of the imitative arts can attain. Indeed, when in their perfection, they can ſcarcely be called imitations, but the very things themſelves; and real nature would perhaps appear leſs perfect than her counterfeit.

The Drama has from early antiquity been diſtinguiſhed into the two grand diviſions of Tragedy and Comedy. It would ſeem that the general character of theſe was univerſally underſtood and agreed on, by the adoption of the terms

tragic

tragic and *comic*, derived from them, into the language of every civilized people. The former of theſe is, we know, conſtantly applied to objects of terror and diſtreſs; the latter, to thoſe of mirth and pleaſantry. There is, however, a more comprehenſive diſtinction of our feelings, which it is proper firſt to conſider.

When we examine the emotions produced in our minds by the view of human actions, we ſhall obſerve a diviſion into the *ſerious*, and the *ludicrous*. I do not think it neceſſary to define or analyſe feelings with which all are well acquainted. It is enough to obſerve that ſerious emotions are produced by the diſplay of all the great paſſions which agitate the ſoul, and by all thoſe actions which are under the juriſdiction of the grand rules of religion and morality;

and that ludicrous emotions are excited by the improprieties and inconſiſtencies of conduct or judgment in ſmaller matters; ſuch as the effects of falſe taſte, or trifling paſſions. When we now apply the words *tragic* and *comic*, we ſhall at once perceive that the former can relate ſolely to ſuch ſubjects as occaſion *ſerious*, and the latter to ſuch as occaſion *ludicrous* emotions.

Now, although the practice of writers has frequently introduced ludicrous parts into the compoſition called a Tragedy, and ſerious parts into that called a Comedy, yet it has ever been underſtood that what conſtitutes the eſſential and invariable character of each is ſomething which is expreſſed by the terms *tragic* and *comic*, and comes under the head of *ſerious* or *ludicrous* emotions. Referring therefore to a future conſideration, the pro-

propriety of introducing ſerious parts in a Comedy, I ſhall now lay down the character of Comedy as *a dramatic compoſition, exhibiting a ludicrous picture of human life and manners.*

THERE are two ſources of ludicrous emotions which it is proper here to diſtinguiſh. One of theſe ariſes from *character*, the other from *incident*. The firſt is attached and appropriated to the perſon, and makes a part, as it were, of his compoſition. The other is merely accidental, proceeding from awkward ſituations, odd and uncommon circumſtances, and the like, which may happen indifferently to every perſon. If we compare theſe with regard to their dignity and utility, we ſhall find a further difference; ſince that proceeding from *character* belongs to a very reſpectable part of knowledge, that of human manners; and has for its end

the correction of foibles: whereas that proceeding from *incident* is mean and trivial in its origin, and anſwers no other purpoſe than preſent mirth. 'Tis true, it is perfectly natural to be pleaſed with riſible objects, even of the loweſt kind, and a faſtidious averſion to their exhibition may be accounted mere affected nicety; yet, ſince we rank Comedy among the higher and more refined ſpecies of compoſition, let us aſſign it the more honourable office of exhibiting and correcting the ludicrous part of *characters*; and leave to Bartholomew Fair the ingenious contrivances of facetious drollery, and handicraft merriment.

THE following ſources may be pointed out from whence comic character is derived.

NATIONS, like individuals, have certain leading features which diſtinguiſh them

them from others. Of theſe there are always ſome of a ludicrous caſt which afford matter of entertainment to their neighbours. Comedy has at all times made very free with national peculiarities; and, although the ridicule has often been conducted in a trivial and illiberal manner, by greatly overcharging the picture, and introducing idle and unjuſt accuſations, yet I think we need not go ſo far as entirely to reject this ſort of ludicrous painting; ſince it may be as important to warn againſt the imitation of foreign follies, as thoſe of our own growth. Indeed, when a Frenchman or Iriſhman is brought upon our ſtage merely to talk broken Engliſh, or make bulls, there can be no plea either of wit or utility to excuſe the illiberal jeſt: but, when the nicer diſtinctions of national character are expoſed with a juſt and delicate ridicule, the ſpectacle may be both

entertaining and inſtructive. Amidſt the tribe of foreign valets to be met with on the Engliſh theatre, I would inſtance CANTON in the *Clandeſtine Marriage*, as an admirable example of true national character, independent on language and grimace. The obſequiouſneſs and attentive flattery of the ſervile Swiſs-Frenchman are quite characteriſtic, as well as the careleſs inſolence and affected airs of BRUSH the Engliſh footman *. O'FLA-

* I AM concerned to obſerve an inſtance of illiberal national ridicule without any merit of compoſition to palliate it, from a reſpectable dramatic writer, which is alſo rendered much more obnoxious by the circumſtances. M. Voltaire's *Eceſſaiſe* was purpoſely written to exhibit a worthy Engliſh character; marked, indeed, with ſome whimſical peculiarities, but diſtinguiſhed by a ſtrong ſpirit of benevolence. It was impoſſible to expoſe national foibles more gently than by combining them with national virtues. When this Piece was brought on our ſtage under the title of the *Engliſh Merchant*, a French valet was inſerted among the *perſonæ dramatis*, characteriſed by nothing but his falſe Engliſh, and for no other end but to be exhibited as a ſcoundrel!

HERTY,

HERTY, the Iriſh ſoldier of fortune in the *Weſt Indian*, is an example of ſimilar merit; much more ſo, I think, than the character from which the piece has its title.

ALTHOUGH ſome part of the character of a nation is pretty uniform and conſtant; yet its manners and cuſtoms in many points are extremely variable. Theſe variations are the peculiar modes and faſhions of the age; and hence the age, as well as the nation, acquires a diſtinguiſhing character. Faſhion, in general, uſurps a dominion only over the ſmaller and leſs important part of manners; ſuch as dreſs, public diverſions, and other matters of taſte. The improprieties of faſhion are therefore of the abſurd and ludicrous kind, and conſequently fit ſubjects of comic ridicule. There is no ſource of Comedy more fertile and pleaſing than this; and

and none in which the end of reformation is likely to be ſo well anſwered. An extravagant faſhion is exhibited upon the ſtage with ſuch advantage of ridicule, that it can ſcarcely ſtand long againſt it; and I make no doubt that Moliere's *Marquis de Maſcarille*, and Cibber's *Lord Foppington*, had a conſiderable ſhare in reforming the prevailing foppery of the times. Faſhion has alſo too much interfered in ſome more ſerious matters, as the ſentiments and ſtudies of the age. Here too Comedy has made its attacks; and the *Alchemiſt*, the *Virtuoſo*, the *Antiquary*, the *Belle Eſprit*, have in their turns undergone the ridicule of the ſtage, when their reſpective purſuits, by being faſhionable, were carried to a fanciful extravagance. It is well known that Moliere, in his comedies of the *Femmes Sçavantes*, and the *Precieuſes Ridicules*, was as ſucceſsful againſt the pedantry and pretenſions to wit which infected

fected the French nation, and particularly the ladies, at that period, as Cervantes in his attack upon knight-errantry.

THERE is another point of national or faſhionable folly in which Comedy might be very uſeful; yet the attempt has been found dangerous; and perhaps the ſubject is too delicate for the ſtage, conſidering the abuſes to which it is liable. I mean popular ſuperſtition, and prieſtcraft. Moliere, who with impunity had attacked every other ſpecies of folly, was almoſt ruined by expoſing a hypocrite and a devotee; and the licentious ridicule of Dryden, and others of that age, was generally aimed, not only againſt ſuperſtition, but religion. The *Spaniſh Friar*, however, is an inſtance in which, with exquiſite humour, the ridicule can hardly be blamed as improper; and it certainly did more hurt to Roman Catholic ſuperſtition than

he

he could ever remedy by his ſcholaſtic *Hind and Panther*. How far the *Minor* comes under the ſame deſcription, would, probably, be a ſubject of diſpute.

PARTICULAR ranks and profeſſions of men have likewiſe characteriſtical peculiarities which are capable of being placed in a ludicrous view; and Comedy has made frequent uſe of this ſource of ridicule. In expoſing profeſſional, as well as national abſurdities, great illiberality and unfairneſs have been ſhewn; both, probably, from the ſame cauſe; a want of ſufficient acquaintance with the whole characters, and taking a judgment of them from a few external circumſtances. Yet, upon the whole, good effects may have ariſen even from this branch of Comedy; ſince, by attacking a profeſſion on a ſide where it was really weak, the members of it have been made ſenſible of,

and

and have reformed thoſe circumſtances which rendered them ridiculous. A good-natured phyſician can never be angry at Moliere's moſt laughable exhibitions of the faculty, when he reflects that the follies ridiculed, though exaggerated in the repreſentation, had a real exiſtence; and, by being held up to public deriſion, have been in a great meaſure reformed. The profeſſors of law, being neceſſarily confined to forms and rules, have not been able to benefit ſo much from the comic ridicule of which they have enjoyed an equally plentiful ſhare.

BESIDES the arrangements which nation and profeſſion make of mankind, there are certain natural claſſes formed from the diverſities of perſonal character. Although the varieties of temper and diſpoſition in men are infinite, ſo that no two perſons probably ever exiſted in whom there

there was an exact conformity, yet there are certain leading features of character which produce a general reſemblance among numerous individuals. Thus the proud man, the vain, the ſanguine, the ſplenetic, the ſuſpicious, the covetous, the laviſh, and ſo forth, are a ſort of abſtract characters which divide the whole human race amongſt them. Now there are, belonging to all theſe, objects of ridicule which it has been the buſineſs of Comedy to exhibit; and though, perhaps, no one individual of each claſs perfectly reſembled the perſon held to view on the ſtage, yet if all the circumſtances exhibited are contained in the general character, it appears ſufficiently natural. The *Miſer* of Moliere is not a picture of any one miſer who ever lived, but of a miſer conſidered as forming a claſs of human characters. As theſe general claſſes, however, are few in number, they muſt be ſoon exhauſted by

by the writers of Comedy, who have been obliged, for the ſake of variety, to exhibit thoſe peculiarities which are more rare and ſingular. Hence have been derived many pictures of that character which we call an *humouriſt*; by which is meant a character diſtinguiſhed by certain ludicrous ſingularities from the reſt of mankind. The humouriſt is not without thoſe marks of diſtinction which he may acquire, like others, from rank, profeſſion, or temper of mind; but all theſe are diſplayed in him after a manner peculiarly his own, and daſhed with his leading oddities. A love of what is uncommon and out of the way has often occaſioned ſuch extravagance in the repreſentation of theſe characters as to diſguſt from their want of probability; but, where a due moderation is obſerved, and the peculiarities, though unuſual, are ſuch as really exiſt in nature, great entertainment

tainment may be derived from their exhibition. Of this kind are the admirable *Miſanthrope* and *Malade Imaginaire* of Moliere; and the *Old Bachelor* and *Sir Sampſon Legend* of Congreve.

FROM hence it appears but a ſmall gradation to the exhibition of individuals upon the ſtage; and yet the difference is important and eſſential. That which marks out the diſtinction between individuals of the ſame ſpecies is ſomething entirely uncommunicable; therefore the rational end of Comedy, which is the reformation of folly, cannot take place in perſonal ridicule; for it will not be alledged that reforming the perſon himſelf is the object. Nor can it ſcarcely ever be juſt to expoſe an individual to the ridicule of the ſtage; ſince folly, and not vice, being the proper ſubject of that ridicule, it is hardly poſſible any one can deſerve

deſerve ſo ſevere a puniſhment. Indeed the expoſing of folly can ſcarcely be the plea; for all the common, or even the rarer kinds of folly lie open to the attack of Comedy under fictitious characters, by means of which the failing may be ridiculed without the perſon. Perſonal ridicule muſt therefore turn, as we find it always has done, upon bodily imperfections, awkward habits, and uncouth geſtures; which the low arts of mimickry inhumanly drag forth to public view, for the mean purpoſe of exciting preſent merriment. In the beſt hands, perſonal Comedy would be a degradation of the ſtage, and an unwarrantable ſeverity; but in the hands it would be likely, if encouraged, to fall into, it would prove an intolerable nuiſance. I ſhould therefore, without heſitation, join thoſe who utterly condemn this ſpecies of comic ridicule. It is alſo to be conſidered, that the author

ſhews his talents to diſadvantage, and cannot lay any baſis of future fame, in this walk. For the reſemblance which depends ſo much upon mimickry is loſt upon thoſe of the audience who are not acquainted with the original, and upon every one who only reads the piece. Mr. Foote's works will aptly exemplify this matter; in which the fund of genuine Comedy, derived from happy ſtrokes upon the manners of the times, and uncommon, but not entirely ſingular characters, will ſecure a laſting admiration, when the mimickry which ſupported the parts of *Squintum* and *Cadwallader* is deſpiſed or forgotten.

HAVING thus attempted to trace the different ſources of what I conceive the eſſential part of true Comedy, the *ridicule derived from character*, it remains to ſay ſomewhat of the mixture of additional

ditional matter which it has received as a compoſition.

During a conſiderable period of modern literature, *wit* was a commodity in great requeſt, and frequently to be met with in all kinds of compoſition. It was no where more abundant than in Comedy, the genius of which it appeared peculiarly to ſuit, from its gaiety and ſatyrical ſmartneſs. Accordingly, the language of Comedy was a ſtring of repartees, in which a thought was bandied about from one to another, till it was quite run out of breath. This made a ſcene paſs off with great vivacity; but the misfortune was, that diſtinction of character was quite loſt in the conteſt. Every perſonage, from the lord to the valet, was as witty as the author himſelf; and, provided good things enow were ſaid, it was no matter from whom they

came. Congreve, with the greateſt talents for true comic humour, and the delineation of ludicrous characters, was ſo overrun with a fondneſs for brilliancy, as frequently to break in upon conſiſtency. Wit is an admirable ornament of Comedy, and, judiciouſly applied, is a high relief to humour, but ſhould never interfere with the more eſſential parts.

We are now, however, happily free from all manner of danger of an inundation of wit. No Congreve ariſes to diſturb the ſententious gravity, and calm ſimplicity of modern Comedy. A moraliſt may congratulate the age on hearing from the theatre compoſitions as pure, ſerious and delicate, as are given from the pulpit. When we conſider how much wit and humour, at the time they were moſt prevalent, were perverted to vicious purpoſes, we may rejoice at the ſacrifice; yet we

we may be allowed to feel a regret at the loſs of an amuſement which might, certainly, have been reconciled with innocence; nay, might perhaps have pleaded utility beyond what is ſubſtituted in its room. *Sentimental Comedy*, as it is called, contains but very faint diſcrimination of character, and ſcarcely any thing of ridicule. Its principal aim is to introduce elegant and refined ſentiment, particularly of the benevolent caſt; and to move the heart by tender and intereſting ſituations. Hence they are, in general, much more affecting than our modern Tragedies, which are formed upon nearly the ſame plan, but labour under the diſadvantage of a formal, ſtately ſtile, and manners removed too far from the rank of common life. One would not, perhaps, wiſh altogether to baniſh from the ſtage pieces ſo moral and innocent; yet it is a pity they are not diſtinguiſhed by ſome appro-

priated name from a thing they ſo little reſemble as true Comedy.

I FEAR, a view of modern manners in other reſpects will ſcarcely allow us to flatter ourſelves that this change in the theatre chiefly proceeds from improved morality. It may, perhaps, be more juſtly attributed to a falſe delicacy of taſte, which renders us unable to bear the repreſentation of low life; and to a real deficiency in genius. With reſpect to the firſt, genuine Comedy knows no diſtinction of rank, but can as heartily enjoy a humourous picture in the common walks of life, where indeed the greateſt variety is to be found, as in the moſt cultivated and refined. Some have placed the diſtinction between Farce and Comedy in the rank from whence the characters are taken; but, I think, very improperly. If there is any real diſtinction beſides the length

length of the pieces, I ſhould take it from the different ſource of the humour; which in Farce is mere ludicrous incident, but in Comedy, ridiculous character. This criterion, however, will not at all agree with the titles under which each ſpecies has already appeared.

As to the other cauſe, deficiency of genius, it too plainly appears in many other productions. Cold correctneſs has laid her repreſſing hand upon imagination, and damped all her powers. The example of the ancients has been thought to juſtify the gravity and ſimplicity of modern Comedy. But, great as they were in many qualities of the mind, in thoſe of wit and humour they were ſtill more defective than even ourſelves in the preſent age. They, who would eagerly catch at a wretched pun, or a meager piece of plot, were certainly with-held from witti-

ciſm and drollery by want of invention, not juſtneſs of taſte. I admire, in the pure Latin of Terence, the elegant ſentiment, and ſtill more the knowledge of the human heart, with which he abounds; but I would not on that account compare his genius, at leaſt in Comedy, with Moliere and Congreve.

> Lenibus atque utinam ſcriptis adjuncta foret vis Comica ———————————

Moral ſentiment is the cheapeſt product of the mind. Novels, and magazines, and even news-papers, are full of it; but wit and humour threaten to leave us with Cheſterfield and Sterne.

STILL, however, I would hope the ſtate of Comedy is not deſperate. The *Clandeſtine Marriage* exhibits an example of comic merit, as various and perfect as perhaps any piece in our language. All the ſources of ludicrous character have con-

contributed to it. National ridicule appears in Canton, and profeſſional in Sterling. Lord Ogleby is an excellent humouriſt. Mrs. Heidleberg and her niece, beſides a comic pettiſhneſs of temper, have plenty of faſhionable follies, modified by city vulgariſm. Even the lovers of tender ſentiment have their ſhare in the entertainment; and I by no means would object to its occaſional introduction, when, as it were, offering itſelf from the circumſtances. Then, beſides Mr. Foote's comic theatre, we have ſeveral pieces, which, though ranged under the liſt of Farces, contain true and original Comedy. Of theſe we may inſtance the *Citizen*, *Polly Honeycomb*, *the Upholſterer*, *the Apprentice*, and *the Oxonian in Town*. It is a miſtake to ſuppoſe that the matter of Comedy can ever fail. Though general characters may be exhauſted, yet the prevailing follies and faſhions

faſhions of the times, with the ſingularities ſtarting up in particular ranks and orders of men, muſt conſtantly ſupply food for the ridicule of the ſtage. This is lawful game; and the purſuit of it is well worthy the encouragement of the public, ſo long as it is unattended with the licentiouſneſs which diſgraced the wit of the laſt age. Let ridicule be ſacred to the intereſts of good ſenſe and virtue; let it never make a good character leſs reſpectable, nor a bad one leſs obnoxious; but let us not reſign its uſe to common-place maxim, and inſipid ſentiment.

THE

THE

HILL OF SCIENCE,

A VISION.

IN that ſeaſon of the year when the ſerenity of the ſky, the various fruits which cover the ground, the diſcoloured foliage of the trees, and all the ſweet, but fading graces of inſpiring autumn, open the mind to benevolence, and diſpoſe it for contemplation; I was wandering in a beautiful and romantic country, till curioſity began to give way to wearineſs; and I ſat me down on the fragment of a rock overgrown with moſs, where

the ruſtling of the falling leaves, the daſhing of waters, and the hum of the diſtant city, ſoothed my mind into the moſt perfect tranquillity, and ſleep inſenſibly ſtole upon me, as I was indulging the agreeable reveries which the objects around me naturally inſpired.

I IMMEDIATELY found myſelf in a vaſt extended plain, in the middle of which aroſe a mountain higher than I had before any conception of. It was covered with a multitude of people, chiefly youth; many of whom preſſed forwards with the livelieſt expreſſion of ardour in their countenance, though the way was in many places ſteep and difficult. I obſerved, that thoſe who had but juſt begun to climb the hill, thought themſelves not far from the top; but as they proceeded, new hills were continually riſing to their view; and the ſummit of the higheſt

higheſt they could before diſcern, ſeemed but the foot of another, till the mountain at length appeared to loſe itſelf in the clouds. As I was gazing on theſe things with aſtoniſhment, my good Genius ſuddenly appeared. 'The mountain before thee,' ſaid he, 'is the HILL OF SCIENCE. On the top is the temple of Truth, whoſe head is above the clouds, and whoſe face is covered with a veil of pure light. Obſerve the progreſs of her votaries; be ſilent, and attentive.'

I SAW that the only regular approach to the mountain was by a gate, called the gate of languages. It was kept by a woman of a penſive and thoughtful appearance, whoſe lips were continually moving, as though ſhe repeated ſomething to herſelf. Her name was MEMORY. On entering this firſt encloſure, I was ſtunned with a confuſed murmur of jarring voices, and diſſonant ſounds; which increaſed

creaſed upon me to ſuch a degree, that I was utterly confounded, and could compare the noiſe to nothing but the confuſion of tongues at Babel. The road was alſo rough and ſtony, and rendered more difficult by heaps of rubbiſh, continually tumbled down from the higher parts of the mountain; and by broken ruins of ancient buildings, which the travellers were obliged to climb over at every ſtep; inſomuch that many, diſguſted with ſo rough a beginning, turned back, and attempted the mountain no more: while others, having conquered this difficulty, had no ſpirits to aſcend further, and ſitting down on ſome fragment of the rubbiſh, harangued the multitude below with the greateſt marks of importance and ſelf-complacency.

About half way up the hill, I obſerved on each ſide the path a thick foreſt covered with continual fogs, and cut out into

into labyrinths, croſs alleys, and ſerpentine walks, entangled with thorns and briars. This was called the *wood of error:* and I heard the voices of many who were loſt up and down in it, calling to one another, and endeavouring in vain to extricate themſelves. The trees in many places ſhot their boughs over the path, and a thick miſt often reſted on it; yet never ſo much but that it was diſcernable by the light which beamed from the countenance of Truth.

In the pleaſanteſt part of the mountain were placed the bowers of the Muſes, whoſe office it was to cheer the ſpirits of the travellers, and encourage their fainting ſteps with ſongs from their divine harps. Not far from hence were the *fields of fiction,* filled with a variety of wild flowers ſpringing up in the greateſt luxuriance, of richer ſcents and brighter colours

colours than I had obſerved in any other climate. And near them was the *dark walk of allegory*, ſo artificially ſhaded, that the light at noon-day was never ſtronger than that of a bright moon-ſhine. This gave it a pleaſingly romantic air for thoſe who delighted in contemplation. The paths and alleys were perplexed with intricate windings, and were all terminated with the ſtatue of a Grace, a Virtue, or a Muſe.

AFTER I had obſerved theſe things, I turned my eyes towards the multitudes who were climbing the ſteep aſcent, and obſerved amongſt them a youth of a lively look, a piercing eye, and ſomething fiery and irregular in all his motions. His name was GENIUS. He darted like an eagle up the mountain, and left his companions gazing after him with envy and admiration: but his progreſs was unequal,

and

and interrupted by a thouſand caprices. When Pleaſure warbled in the valley, he mingled in her train. When Pride beckoned towards the precipice, he ventured to the tottering edge. He delighted in devious and untried paths; and made ſo many excurſions from the road, that his feebler companions often outſtripped him. I obſerved that the Muſes beheld him with partiality; but Truth often frowned and turned aſide her face. While Genius was thus waſting his ſtrength in eccentric flights, I ſaw a perſon of a very different appearance, named APPLICATION. He crept along with a ſlow and unremitting pace, his eyes fixed on the top of the mountain, patiently removing every ſtone that obſtructed his way, till he ſaw moſt of thoſe below him who had at firſt derided his ſlow and toilſome progreſs. Indeed there were few who aſcended the hill with equal and uninterrupted ſteadineſs; for, beſide the difficulties of the way, they

were continually ſolicited to turn aſide by a numerous crowd of Appetites, Paſſions, and Pleaſures, whoſe importunity, when they had once complied with, they became leſs and leſs able to reſiſt; and, though they often returned to the path, the aſperities of the road were more ſeverely felt, the hill appeared more ſteep and rugged, the fruits which were wholeſome and refreſhing, ſeemed harſh and ill-taſted, their ſight grew dim, and their feet tript at every little obſtruction.

I SAW, with ſome ſurprize, that the Muſes, whoſe buſineſs was to cheer and encourage thoſe who were toiling up the aſcent, would often ſing in the bowers of Pleaſure, and accompany thoſe who were enticed away at the call of the Paſſions. They accompanied them, however, but a little way, and always forſook them when they loſt ſight of the hill. Their tyrants then doubled their chains upon

the unhappy captives, and led them away without reſiſtance to the cells of Ignorance, or the manſions of Miſery. Amongſt the innumerable ſeducers, who were endeavouring to draw away the votaries of Truth from the path of Science, there was one ſo little formidable in her appearance, and ſo gentle and languid in her attempts, that I ſhould ſcarcely have taken notice of her, but for the numbers ſhe had imperceptibly loaded with her chains. INDOLENCE (for ſo ſhe was called), far from proceeding to open hoſtilities, did not attempt to turn their feet out of the path, but contented herſelf with retarding their progreſs; and the purpoſe ſhe could not force them to abandon, ſhe perſuaded them to delay. Her touch had a power like that of the Torpedo, which withered the ſtrength of thoſe who came within its influence. Her unhappy captives ſtill turned their faces towards the temple, and always

hoped to arrive there; but the ground ſeemed to ſlide from beneath their feet, and they found themſelves at the bottom before they ſuſpected that they had changed their place. The placid ſerenity which at firſt appeared in their countenance, changed by degrees into a melancholy languor, which was tinged with deeper and deeper gloom as they glided down the *ſtream of inſignificance*; a dark and ſluggiſh water, which is curled by no breeze, and enlivened by no murmur, till it falls into a dead ſea, where the ſtartled paſſengers are awakened by the ſhock, and the next moment buried in the gulph of oblivion.

Of all the unhappy deſerters from the paths of Science, none ſeemed leſs able to return than the followers of Indolence. The captives of Appetite and Paſſion could often ſeize the moment when their tyrants were languid or aſleep to eſcape from

from their enchantment; but the dominion of Indolence was conſtant and unremitted, and ſeldom reſiſted till reſiſtance was in vain.

AFTER contemplating theſe things, I turned my eyes towards the top of the mountain, where the air was always pure and exhilarating, the path ſhaded with laurels and other ever-greens, and the effulgence which beamed from the face of the Goddeſs ſeemed to ſhed a glory round her votaries. Happy, ſaid I, are they who are permitted to aſcend the mountain!—but while I was pronouncing this exclamation with uncommon ardour, I ſaw ſtanding beſide me a form of diviner features and a more benign radiance. Happier, ſaid ſhe, are thoſe whom VIRTUE conducts to the manſions of Content! — What, ſaid I, does Virtue then reſide in the vale?— I am found, ſaid ſhe, in the vale, and

I illuminate the mountain. I cheer the cottager at his toil, and inſpire the ſage at his meditation. I mingle in the crowd of cities, and bleſs the hermit in his cell. I have a temple in every heart that owns my influence; and to him that wiſhes for me I am already preſent. Science may raiſe you to eminence, but I alone can guide you to felicity! While the Goddeſs was thus ſpeaking, I ſtretched out my arms towards her with a vehemence which broke my ſlumbers. The chill dews were falling around me, and the ſhades of evening ſtretched over the landſcape. I haſtened homeward, and reſigned the night to ſilence and meditation.

ON

ON

ROMANCES,

AN IMITATION.

OF all the multifarious productions which the efforts of ſuperior genius, or the labours of ſcholaſtic induſtry, have crowded upon the world, none are peruſed with more inſatiable avidity, or diſſeminated with more univerſal applauſe, than the narrations of feigned events, deſcriptions of imaginary ſcenes, and delineations of ideal characters. The celebrity of other authors is confined

within very narrow limits. The Geometrician and Divine, the Antiquary and the Critic, however diſtinguiſhed by unconteſted excellence, can only hope to pleaſe thoſe whom a conformity of diſpoſition has engaged in ſimilar purſuits; and muſt be content to be regarded by the reſt of the world with the ſmile of frigid indifference, or the contemptuous ſneer of ſelf-ſufficient folly. The collector of ſhells and the anatomiſt of inſects is little inclined to enter into theological diſputes: the Divine is not apt to regard with veneration the uncouth diagrams and tedious calculations of the Aſtronomer: the man whoſe life has been conſumed in adjuſting the diſputes of lexicographers, or elucidating the learning of antiquity, cannot eaſily bend his thoughts to recent tranſactions, or readily intereſt himſelf in the unimportant hiſtory of his contemporaries: and the Cit,

Cit, who knows no buſineſs but acquiring wealth, and no pleaſure but diſplaying it, has a heart equally ſhut up to argument and fancy, to the batteries of ſyllogiſm, and the arrows of wit. To the writer of fiction alone, every ear is open, and every tongue laviſh of applauſe; curioſity ſparkles in every eye, and every boſom is throbbing with concern.

It is, however, eaſy to account for this enchantment. To follow the chain of perplexed ratiocination, to view with critical ſkill the airy architecture of ſyſtems, to unravel the web of ſophiſtry, or weigh the merits of oppoſite hypotheſes, requires perſpicacity, and preſuppoſes learning. Works of this kind, therefore, are not ſo well adapted to the generality of readers as familiar and colloquial compoſition; for few can reaſon, but all can feel; and many who cannot

cannot enter into an argument, may yet liſten to a tale. The writer of Romance has even an advantage over thoſe who endeavour to amuſe by the play of fancy; who, from the fortuitous colliſon of diſſimilar ideas produce the ſcintillations of wit; or by the vivid glow of poetical imagery delight the imagination with colours of ideal radiance. The attraction of the magnet is only exerted upon ſimilar particles; and to taſte the beauties of Homer, it is requiſite to partake his fire; but every one can reliſh the author who repreſents common life, becauſe every one can refer to the originals from whence his ideas were taken. He relates events to which all are liable, and applies to paſſions which all have felt. The gloom of ſolitude, the languor of inaction, the corroſions of diſappointment, and the toil of thought, induce men to ſtep aſide from the rugged road of life,

and

and wander in the fairy land of fiction; where every bank is ſprinkled with flowers, and every gale loaded with perfume; where every event introduces a hero, and every cottage is inhabited by a Grace. Invited by theſe flattering ſcenes, the ſtudent quits the inveſtigation of truth, in which he perhaps meets with no leſs fallacy, to exhilarate his mind with new ideas, more agreeable, and more eaſily attained: the buſy relax their attention by deſultory reading, and ſmooth the agitation of a ruffled mind with images of peace, tranquillity, and pleaſure: the idle and the gay relieve the liſtleſſneſs of leiſure, and diverſify the round of life by a rapid ſeries of events pregnant with rapture and aſtoniſhment; and the penſive ſolitary fills up the vacuities of his heart by intereſting himſelf in the fortunes of imaginary beings, and forming connections with ideal excellence.

It is, indeed, no ways extraordinary that the mind ſhould be charmed by fancy, and attracted by pleaſure; but that we ſhould liſten with complacence to the groans of miſery, and delight to view the exacerbations of complicated anguiſh, that we ſhould chooſe to chill the boſom with imaginary fears, and dim the eyes with fictitious ſorrow, ſeems a kind of paradox of the heart, and can only be credited becauſe it is univerſally felt. Various are the hypotheſes which have been formed to account for the diſpoſition of the mind to riot in this ſpecies of intellectual luxury. Some have imagined that we are induced to acquieſce with greater patience in our own lot, by beholding pictures of life, tinged with deeper horrors, and loaded with more excruciating calamities; as, to a perſon ſuddenly emerging out of a dark room, the fainteſt glimmering of twilight aſſumes a luſtre from the contraſted

contraſted gloom. Others, with yet deeper refinement, ſuppoſe that we take upon ourſelves this burden of adſcititious ſorrows, in order to feaſt upon the conſciouſneſs of our own virtue. We commiſerate others, ſay they, that we may applaud ourſelves; and the ſigh of compaſſionate ſympathy is always followed by the gratulations of ſelf-complacent eſteem. But ſurely they who would thus reduce the ſympathetic emotions of pity to a ſyſtem of refined ſelfiſhneſs, have but ill attended to the genuine feelings of humanity. It would, however, exceed the limits of this paper, ſhould I attempt an accurate inveſtigation of theſe ſentiments. But, let it be remembered, that we are more attracted by thoſe ſcenes which intereſt our paſſions, or gratify our curioſity, than thoſe which delight our fancy: and, ſo far from being indifferent to the miſeries of others, we are, at the

time, totally regardleſs of our own. And let not thoſe on whom the hand of Time has impreſſed the characters of oracular wiſdom, cenſure with too much acrimony productions which are thus calculated to pleaſe the imagination, and intereſt the heart. They teach us to think, by inuring us to feel: they ventilate the mind by ſudden guſts of paſſion; and prevent the ſtagnation of thought, by a freſh infuſion of diſſimilar ideas.

SELÁMA;

SELÁMA;

AN

IMITATION OF OSSIAN.

WHAT ſoft voice of ſorrow is in the breeze? what lovely ſun-beam of beauty trembling on the rock? Its bright hair is bathed in ſhowers; and it looks faint and dim, through its miſt on the ruſhy plain. Why art thou alone, maid of the mournful look? The cold dropping rain is on the rocks of Torléna—

léna, the blaſt of the deſart lifts thy yellow locks. Let thy ſteps be in the hall of ſhells, by the blue winding ſtream of Clutha: let the harp tremble beneath thy fingers; and the ſons of heroes liſten to the muſic of ſongs.

SHALL my ſteps be in the hall of ſhells, and the aged low in the duſt? The father of Seláma is low behind this rock, on his bed of wither'd leaves: the thiſtle's down is ſtrewed over him by the wind, and mixes with his grey hair. Thou art fallen, chief of Etha! without thy fame; and there is none to revenge thy death. But thy daughter will ſit, pale, beſide thee, till ſhe ſinks, a faded flower, upon thy lifeleſs form. Leave the maid of Clutha, ſon of the ſtranger! in the red eye of her tears!

How fell the car-borne Connal, blue-eyed mourner of the rock? Mine arm

is

is not weakened in battle; nor my ſword without its fame.

CONNAL was a fire in his youth, that lighten'd through fields of renown: but the flame weakly glimmered through grey aſhes of age. His courſe was like a ſtar moving through the heavens: it walketh in brightneſs, but leaveth no track behind; its ſilver path cannot be found in the ſky. The ſtrength of Etha is rolled away like a tale of other years; and his eyes have failed. Feeble and dark, he ſits in his hall, and hears the diſtant tread of a ſtranger's ſteps; the haughty ſteps of Tonthormo, from the roar of Duvranno's echoing ſtream. He ſtood in the hall like a pillar of darkneſs, on whoſe top is the red beam of fire: wide rolled his eyes beneath the gloomy arch of his bent brow; as flames in two caves of a rock, over-hung with the black pine of the de-

ſart. They had rolled on Seláma, and he aſked the daughter of Connal. Tonthormo! breaker of ſhields! thou art a meteor of death in war, whoſe fiery hair ſtreams on the clouds, and the nations are withered beneath its path. Dwell, Tonthormo! amidſt thy hundred hills, and liſten to thy torrent's roar; but the ſoft ſigh of the virgins is with the chief of Crono; Hidallan is the dream of Seláma, the dweller of her ſecret thoughts. A ruſhing ſtorm in war, a breeze that ſighs over the fallen foe; pleaſant are thy words of peace, and thy ſongs at the moſſy brook. Thy ſmiles are like the moon-beams trembling on the waves. Thy voice is the gale of ſummer that whiſpers among the reeds of the lake, and awakens the harp of Moilena with all its lightly-trembling ſtrings. Oh that thy calm light was around me! my ſoul ſhould not fear the gloomy chief of Duv-

ranno. He came with his ſtately ſteps.— My ſhield is before thee, maid of my love! a wall of ſhelter from the lightning of ſwords. They fought. Tonthormo bends in all his pride, before the arm of youth. But a voice was in the breaſt of Hidallan, ſhall I ſlay the love of Seláma? Seláma dwells in thy dark boſom, ſhall my ſteel enter there? Live, thou ſtorm of war! He gave again his ſword. But, careleſs as he ſtrode away, rage aroſe in the troubled thoughts of the vanquiſh'd. He mark'd his time, and ſidelong pierced the heart of the generous ſon of Semo. His fair hair is ſpread on the duſt, his eyes are bent on the trembling beam of Clutha. Farewel, light of my ſoul! They are cloſed in darkneſs. Feeble waſt thou then, my father! and in vain didſt thou call for help. Thy grey locks are ſcatter'd, as a wreath of ſnow on the top of a wither'd trunk;

which the boy bruſhes away with his ſtaff; and careleſs ſingeth as he walks. Who ſhall defend thee, my daughter! ſaid the broken voice of Etha's chief. Fair flower of the deſart! the tempeſt ſhall ruſh over thee; and thou ſhalt be low beneath the foot of the ſavage ſon of prey. But I will wither, my father, on thy tomb. Weak and alone I dwell amidſt my tears, there is no young warrior to lift the ſpear, no brother of love! Oh that mine arm were ſtrong! I would ruſh amidſt the battle. Seláma has no friend!

But Seláma has a friend, ſaid the kindling ſoul of Reuthamir. I will fight thy battles, lovely daughter of kings; and the ſun of Duvranno ſhall ſet in blood. But when I return in peace, and the ſpirits of thy foes are on my ſword, meet me with thy ſmiles of love, maid of Clutha!

Clutha! with thy ſlow-rolling eyes. Let the ſoft ſound of thy ſteps be heard in my halls, that the mother of Reuthamir may rejoice. Whence, ſhe will ſay, is this beam of the diſtant land? Thou ſhalt dwell in her boſom.

My thoughts are with him who is low in the duſt, ſon of Cormac! But lift the ſpear, thou friend of the unhappy! the light of my ſoul may return.

He ſtrode in his rattling arms. Tall, in a gloomy foreſt, ſtood the ſurly ſtrength of Duvranno. Gleaming behind the dark trees was his broad ſhield; like the moon when it riſes in blood, and the duſky clouds ſail low, and heavy, athwart its path. Thoughts, like the troubled ocean, ruſh'd over his ſoul, and he ſtruck, with his ſpear, the ſounding pine. Starting, he mix'd in battle

with the chief of woody Morna. Long was the ſtrife of arms; and the giant ſons of the foreſt trembled at their ſtrokes. At length Tonthormo fell—The ſword of Reuthamir wav'd, a blue flame, around him. He bites the ground in rage. His blood is poured, a dark red ſtream, into Oithona's trembling waves. Joy brighten'd in the ſoul of Reuthamir; when a young warrior came, with his forward ſpear. He moved in the light of beauty; but his words were haughty and fierce. Is Tonthormo fallen in blood, the friend of my early years? Die, thou dark-ſoul'd chief! for never ſhall Selâma be thine, the maid of his love. Lovely ſhone her eyes, through tears, in the hall of her grief, when I ſtood by the chief of Duvranno, in the riſing ſtrife of Clutha.

RETIRE, thou ſwelling voice of pride!

thy

thy ſpear is light as the taper reed. Pierce the roes of the deſart; and call the hunter to the feaſt of ſongs, but ſpeak not of the daughter of Connal, ſon of the feeble arm! Seláma is the love of heroes.

TRY thy ſtrength with the feeble arm, ſaid the riſing pride of youth. Thou ſhalt vaniſh like a cloud of miſt before the ſun, when he looks abroad in the power of his brightneſs, and the ſtorms are rolled away from before his face.

BUT thou thyſelf didſt fall before Reuthamir, in all thy boaſting words. As a tall aſh of the mountain, when the tempeſt takes its green head and lays it level on the plain.

COME from thy ſecret cave, Seláma! thy foes are ſilent and dark. Thou dove that hideſt in the clefts of the rocks! the

ſtorm is over and paſt. Come from thy rock, Seláma! and give thy white hand to the chief who never fled from the face of glory, in all its terrible brightneſs.

She gave her hand, but it was trembling and cold, for the ſpear was deep in her ſide. Red, beneath her mail, the current of crimſon wandered down her white breaſt, as the track of blood on Cromla's mountains of ſnow, when the wounded deer ſlowly croſſes the heath, and the hunters cries are in the breeze. Bleſt be the ſpear of Reuthamir! ſaid the faint voice of the lovely, I feel it cold in my heart. Lay me by the ſon of Semo. Why ſhould I know another love? Raiſe the tomb of the aged, his thin form ſhall rejoice, as he ſails on a low-hung cloud, and guides the wintry ſtorm. Open your airy halls, ſpirits of my love!

AND

AND have I quench'd the light which was pleaſant to my ſoul? ſaid the chief of Morna. My ſteps moved in darkneſs, why were the words of ſtrife in thy tale? Sorrow, like a cloud, comes over my ſoul, and ſhades the joy of mighty deeds. Soft be your reſt in the narrow houſe, children of grief! The breeze in the long whiſtling graſs ſhall not awaken you. The tempeſt ſhall ruſh over you, and the bulruſh bow its head upon your tomb, but ſilence ſhall dwell in your habitation; long repoſe, and the peace of years to come. The voice of the bard ſhall raiſe your remembrance in the diſtant land, and mingle your tale of woe with the murmur of other ſtreams. Often ſhall the harp ſend forth a mournful ſound, and the tear dwell in the ſoft eyes of the daughters of Morna.

SUCH were the words of Reuthamir, while

while he raiſed the tombs of the fallen. Sad were his ſteps towards the towers of his fathers, as muſing he croſs'd the dark heath of Lena, and ſtruck, at times, the thiſtle's beard.

AGAINST

AGAINST INCONSISTENCY IN OUR EXPECTATIONS.

" WHAT is more reaſonable, than that
" they who take pains for any thing,
" ſhould get moſt in that particular
" for which they take pains? They
" have taken pains for power, you for
" right principles; they for riches, you
" for a proper uſe of the appearances
" of things: ſee whether they have the
" advantage of you in that for which
" you have taken pains, and which
" they neglect: If they are in power,
" and you not, why will not you ſpeak
" the

" the truth to yourſelf, that you do
" nothing for the ſake of power, but
" that they do every thing? No, but
" ſince I take care to have right prin-
" ciples, it is more reaſonable that I
" ſhould have power. Yes, in reſpect
" to what you take care about, your
" principles. But give up to others
" the things in which they have taken
" more care than you. Elſe it is juſt
" as if, becauſe you have right prin-
" ciples, you ſhould think it fit that
" when you ſhoot an arrow, you ſhould
" hit the mark better than an archer,
" or that you ſhould forge better than
" a ſmith."

CARTER'S EPICTETUS.

As moſt of the unhappineſs in the world ariſes rather from diſappointed deſires, than from poſitive evil, it is of the utmoſt conſequence to attain juſt notions

notions of the laws and order of the univerſe, that we may not vex ourſelves with fruitleſs wiſhes, or give way to groundleſs and unreaſonable diſcontent. The laws of natural philoſophy, indeed, are tolerably underſtood and attended to; and though we may ſuffer inconveniences, we are ſeldom diſappointed in conſequence of them. No man expects to preſerve orange-trees in the open air through an Engliſh winter; or when he has planted an acorn, to ſee it become a large oak in a few months. The mind of man naturally yields to neceſſity; and our wiſhes ſoon ſubſide when we ſee the impoſſibility of their being gratified. Now, upon an accurate inſpection, we ſhall find, in the moral government of the world, and the order of the intellectual ſyſtem, laws as determinate fixed and invariable as any in Newton's Principia. The progreſs of vegetation is not more certain than the growth

of

of habit; nor is the power of attraction more clearly proved than the force of affection or the influence of example. The man therefore who has well ſtudied the operations of nature in mind as well as matter, will acquire a certain moderation and equity in his claims upon Providence. He never will be diſappointed either in himſelf or others. He will act with preciſion; and expect that effect and that alone from his efforts, which they are naturally adapted to produce. For want of this, men of merit and integrity often cenſure the diſpoſitions of Providence for ſuffering characters they deſpiſe to run away with advantages which, they yet know, are purchaſed by ſuch means as a high and noble ſpirit could never ſubmit to. If you refuſe to pay the price, why expect the purchaſe? We ſhould conſider this world as a great mart of commerce, where fortune expoſes to our

view

view various commodities, riches, eaſe, tranquillity, fame, integrity, knowledge. Every thing is marked at a ſettled price. Our time, our labour, our ingenuity, is ſo much ready money which we are to lay out to the beſt advantage. Examine, compare, chooſe, reject; but ſtand to your own judgment; and do not, like children, when you have purchaſed one thing, repine that you do not poſſeſs another which you did not purchaſe. Such is the force of well-regulated induſtry, that a ſteady and vigorous exertion of our faculties, directed to one end, will generally inſure ſucceſs. Would you, for inſtance, be rich? Do you think that ſingle point worth the ſacrificing every thing elſe to? You may then be rich. Thouſands have become ſo from the loweſt beginnings by toil, and patient diligence, and attention to the minuteſt articles of expence and profit. But you muſt give

up

up the pleaſures of leiſure, of a vacant mind, of a free unſuſpicious temper. If you preſerve your integrity, it muſt be a coarſe-ſpun and vulgar honeſty. Thoſe high and lofty notions of morals which you brought with you from the ſchools muſt be conſiderably lowered, and mixed with the baſer alloy of a jealous and wordly-minded prudence. You muſt learn to do hard, if not unjuſt things; and for the nice embarraſſments of a delicate and ingenuous ſpirit, it is neceſſary for you to get rid of them as faſt as poſſible. You muſt ſhut your heart againſt the Muſes, and be content to feed your underſtanding with plain, houſhold truths. In ſhort, you muſt not attempt to enlarge your ideas, or poliſh your taſte, or refine you ſentiments; but muſt keep on in one beaten track, without turning aſide either to the right hand or to the left. " But I cannot ſubmit to drudgery like

this—I feel a ſpirit above it." 'Tis well: be above it then; only do not repine that you are not rich.

Is knowledge the pearl of peace? That too may be purchaſed—by ſteady application, and long ſolitary hours of ſtudy and reflection. Beſtow theſe, and you ſhall be wiſe. "But (ſays the man of letters) what a hardſhip is it that many an illiterate fellow who cannot conſtrue the motto of the arms on his coach, ſhall raiſe a fortune and make a figure, while I have little more than the common conveniences of life." *Et tibi magna ſatis!*—Was it in order to raiſe a fortune that you conſumed the ſprightly hours of youth in ſtudy and retirement? Was it to be rich that you grew pale over the midnight lamp, and diſtilled the ſweetneſs from the Greek and Roman ſpring? You have then miſtaken your path, and ill

employed your induſtry. "What reward have I then for all my labours?" What reward! A large comprehenſive ſoul, well purged from vulgar fears, and perturbations, and prejudices; able to comprehend and interpret the works of man —of God. A rich, flouriſhing, cultivated mind, pregnant with inexhauſtible ſtores of entertainment and reflection. A perpetual ſpring of freſh ideas; and the conſcious dignity of ſuperior intelligence. Good heaven! and what reward can you aſk beſides?

"But is it not ſome reproach upon the œconomy of Providence that ſuch a one, who is a mean dirty fellow, ſhould have amaſſed wealth enough to buy half a nation?" Not in the leaſt. He made himſelf a mean dirty fellow for that very end. He has paid his health, his conſcience, his liberty for it; and will you envy

vy him his bargain? Will you hang your head and bluſh in his preſence becauſe he outſhines you in equipage and ſhow? Lift up your brow with a noble confidence, and ſay to yourſelf, I have not theſe things, it is true; but it is becauſe I have not ſought, becauſe I have not deſired them; it is becauſe I poſſeſs ſomething better. I have choſen my lot. I am content and ſatisfied.

You are a modeſt man—You love quiet and independence, and have a delicacy and reſerve in your temper which renders it impoſſible for you to elbow your way in the world, and be the herald of your own merits. Be content then with a modeſt retirement, with the eſteem of your intimate friends, with the praiſes of a blameleſs heart, and a delicate ingenuous ſpirit; but reſign the ſplendid diſtinctions of the world to thoſe who can better ſcramble for them.

THE man whoſe tender ſenſibility of conſcience and ſtrict regard to the rules of morality makes him ſcrupulous and fearful of offending, is often heard to complain of the diſadvantages he lies under in every path of honour and profit. "Could I but get over ſome nice points, and conform to the practice and opinion of thoſe about me, I might ſtand as fair a chance as others for dignities and preferment." And why can you not? What hinders you from diſcarding this troubleſome ſcrupuloſity of yours which ſtands ſo grievouſly in your way? If it be a ſmall thing to enjoy a healthful mind, ſound at the very core, that does not ſhrink from the keeneſt inſpection; inward freedom from remorſe and perturbation; unſullied whiteneſs and ſimplicity of manners; a genuine integrity

Pure in the laſt receſſes of the mind;

if you think theſe advantages an inadequate

quate recompence for what you reſign, diſmiſs your ſcruples this inſtant, and be a ſlave-merchant, a paraſite, or—what you pleaſe.

If theſe be motives weak, break off betimes;

and as you have not ſpirit to aſſert the dignity of virtue, be wiſe enough not to forego the emoluments of vice.

I MUCH admire the ſpirit of the ancient philoſophers, in that they never attempted, as our moraliſts often do, to lower the tone of philoſophy, and make it conſiſtent with all the indulgences of indolence and ſenſuality. They never thought of having the bulk of mankind for their diſciples; but kept themſelves as diſtinct as poſſible from a worldly life. They plainly told men what *sacrifices* were required, and what *advantages* they were which might be *expected*.

Si virtus hoc una poteſt dare, fortis omiſſis
Hoc age deliciis———————

If you would be a philoſopher theſe are the terms. You muſt do thus and thus: There is no other way. If not, go and be one of the vulgar.

THERE is no one quality gives ſo much dignity to a character as conſiſtency of conduct. Even if a man's purſuits be wrong and unjuſtifiable, yet if they are proſecuted with ſteadineſs and vigour, we cannot withhold our admiration. The moſt characteriſtic mark of a great mind is to chooſe ſome one important object, and purſue it through life. It was this made Cæſar a great man. His object was ambition; he purſued it ſteadily, and was always ready to ſacrifice to it every interfering paſſion or inclination.

THERE is a pretty paſſage in one of Lucian's dialogues, where Jupiter com-

plains to Cupid that though he has had ſo many intrigues, he was never ſincerely beloved. In order to be loved, ſays Cupid, you muſt lay aſide your ægis and your thunder-bolts, and you muſt curl and perfume your hair, and place a garland on your head, and walk with a ſoft ſtep, and aſſume a winning obſequious deportment. But, replied Jupiter, I am not willing to reſign ſo much of my dignity. Then, returns Cupid, leave off deſiring to be loved—He wanted to be Jupiter and Adonis at the ſame time.

It muſt be confeſſed, that men of genius are of all others moſt inclined to make theſe unreaſonable claims. As their reliſh for enjoyment is ſtrong, their views large and comprehenſive, and they feel themſelves lifted above the common bulk of mankind, they are apt to ſlight that natural reward of praiſe and admiration

which is ever largely paid to diſtinguiſhed abilties; and to expect to be called forth to public notice and favour: without conſidering that their talents are commonly very unfit for active life; that their eccentricity and turn for ſpeculation diſqualifies them for the buſineſs of the world, which is beſt carried on by men of moderate genius; and that ſociety is not obliged to reward any one who is not uſeful to it. The Poets have been a very unreaſonable race, and have often complained loudly of the neglect of genius and the ingratitude of the age. The tender and penſive Cowley, and the elegant Shenſtone, had their minds tinctured by this diſcontent; and even the ſublime melancholy of Young was too much owing to the ſtings of diſappointed ambition.

THE moderation we have been endeavouring

vouring to inculcate will likewiſe prevent much mortification and diſguſt in our commerce with mankind. As we ought not to wiſh in ourſelves, ſo neither ſhould we expect in our friends contrary qualifications. Young and ſanguine, when we enter the world, and feel our affections drawn forth by any particular excellence in a character, we immediately give it credit for all others; and are beyond meaſure diſguſted when we come to diſcover, as we ſoon muſt diſcover, the defects in the other ſide of the balance. But nature is much more frugal than to heap together all manner of ſhining qualities in one glaring maſs. Like a judicious painter ſhe endeavours to preſerve a certain unity of ſtile and colouring in her pieces. Models of abſolute perfection are only to be met with in romance; where exquiſite beauty and brilliant wit, and profound judgment, and immaculate virtue, are all blended

blended together to adorn ſome favourite character. As an anatomiſt knows that the racer cannot have the ſtrength and muſcles of the draught-horſe; and that winged men, gryffons, and mermaids muſt be mere creatures of the imagination; ſo the philoſopher is ſenſible that there are combinations of moral qualities which never can take place but in idea. There is a different air and complexion in characters as well as in faces, though perhaps each equally beautiful; and the excellencies of one cannot be transferred to the other. Thus if one man poſſeſſes a ſtoical apathy of ſoul, acts independent of the opinion of the world, and fulfils every duty with mathematical exactneſs, you muſt not expect that man to be greatly influenced by the weakneſs of pity, or the partialities of friendſhip: you muſt not be offended that he does not fly to meet you after a ſhort abſence;

or

or require from him the convivial ſpirit and honeſt effuſions of a warm, open, ſuſceptible heart. If another is remarkable for a lively active zeal, inflexible integrity, a ſtrong indignation againſt vice, and freedom in reproving it, he will probably have ſome little bluntneſs in his addreſs not altogether ſuitable to poliſhed life; he will want the winning arts of converſation; he will diſguſt by a kind of haughtineſs and negligence in his manner, and often hurt the delicacy of his acquaintance with harſh and diſagreeable truths.

We uſually ſay—that man is a genius, *but* he has ſome whims and oddities—ſuch a one has a very general knowledge, *but* he is ſuperficial; &c. Now in all ſuch caſes we ſhould ſpeak more rationally did we ſubſtitute *therefore* for *but*.

But

He is a genius, *therefore* he is whimſical; and the like.

IT is the fault of the preſent age, owing to the freer commerce that different ranks and profeſſions now enjoy with each other, that characters are not marked with ſufficient ſtrength: the ſeveral claſſes run too much into one another. We have fewer pedants, it is true, but we have fewer ſtriking originals. Every one is expected to have ſuch a tincture of general knowledge as is incompatible with going deep into any ſcience; and ſuch a conformity to faſhionable manners as checks the free workingsof the ruling paſſion, and gives an inſipid ſameneſs to the face of ſociety, under the idea of poliſh and regularity.

THERE is a caſt of manners peculiar and becoming to each age, ſex, and profeſſion;

feſſion; one, therefore, ſhould not throw out illiberal and common-place cenſures againſt another. Each is perfect in its kind. A woman as a woman: a tradeſman as a tradeſman. We are often hurt by the brutality and ſluggiſh conceptions of the vulgar; not conſidering that ſome there muſt be to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, and that cultivated genius, or even any great refinement and delicacy in their moral feelings, would be a real misfortune to them.

Let us then ſtudy the philoſophy of the human mind. The man who is maſter of this ſcience, will know what to expect from every one. From this man, wiſe advice; from that, cordial ſympathy; from another, caſual entertainment. The paſſions and inclinations of others are his tools, which he can uſe with

with as much preciſion as he would the mechanical powers; and he can as readily make allowance for the workings of vanity, or the bias of ſelf-intereſt in his friends, as for the power of friction, or the irregularities of the needle.

THE

THE

CANAL AND THE BROOK.

AN APOLOGUE.

A DELIGHTFULLY pleaſant evening ſucceeding a ſultry ſummer-day, invited me to take a ſolitary walk; and leaving the duſt of the highway, I fell into a path which led along a pleaſant little valley watered by a ſmall meandering brook. The meadow-ground on its banks had been lately mown, and the new graſs

was

was ſpringing up with a lively verdure. The brook was hid in ſeveral places by ſhrubs that grew on each ſide, and intermingled their branches. The ſides of the valley were roughened by ſmall irregular thickets; and the whole ſcene had an air of ſolitude and retirement, uncommon in the neighbourhood of a populous town. The Duke of Bridgewater's canal croſſed the valley, high raiſed on a mound of earth, which preſerved a level with the elevated ground on each ſide. An arched road was carried under it, beneath which the brook that ran along the valley was conveyed by a ſubterraneous paſſage. I threw myſelf upon a green bank, ſhaded by a leafy thicket, and reſting my head upon my hand, after a welcome indolence had overcome my ſenſes, I ſaw, with the eyes of fancy, the following ſcene.

THE firm-built ſide of the aqueduct ſuddenly

ſuddenly opened, and a gigantic form iſſued forth, which I ſoon diſcovered to be the *Genius of the Canal.* He was clad in a cloſe garment of a ruſſet hue. A mural crown, indented with battlements, ſurrounded his brow. His naked feet were diſcoloured with clay. On his left ſhoulder he bore a huge pick-ax; and in his right hand he held certain inſtruments, uſed in ſurveying and levelling. His looks were thoughtful, and his features harſh. The breach through which he proceeded, inſtantly cloſed; and with a heavy tread he advanced into the valley. As he approached the brook, the *Deity of the Stream* aroſe to meet him. He was habited in a light green mantle, and the clear drops fell from his dark hair, which was encircled with a wreath of water lily, interwoven with ſweet ſcented flag. An angling rod ſupported his ſteps. The Genius of the Canal eyed him with a

contemptuous look, and in a hoarſe voice thus began:

" HENCE, ignoble rill! with thy ſcanty
" tribute to thy lord, the Merſey; nor
" thus waſte thy almoſt exhauſted urn in
" lingering windings along the vale.
" Feeble as thine aid is, it will not be
" unacceptable to that maſter ſtream
" himſelf; for, as I lately croſſed his
" channel, I perceived his ſands loaded
" with ſtranded veſſels. I ſaw, and pitied
" him, for undertaking a taſk to which
" he is unequal. But thou, whoſe languid
" current is obſcured by weeds, and in-
" terrupted by miſhapen pebbles; who
" loſeſt thyſelf in endleſs mazes, remote
" from any ſound, but thy own idle
" gurgling; how canſt thou ſupport an
" exiſtence ſo contemptible and uſeleſs?
" For me, the nobleſt child of art, who
" hold my unremitting courſe from hill

" to

"to hill, over vales and rivers; who "pierce the ſolid rock for my paſſage, "and connect unknown lands with "diſtant ſeas; wherever I appear I am "viewed with aſtoniſhment, and exulting "commerce hails my waves. Behold "my channel thronged with capacious "veſſels for the conveyance of mer-"chandiſe, and ſplendid barges for the "uſe and pleaſure of travellers; my "banks crowned with airy bridges and "huge warehouſes, and echoing with "the buſy ſounds of induſtry. Pay then "the homage due from ſloth and ob-"ſcurity to grandeur and utility."

"I READILY acknowledge," replied the Deity of the Brook, in a modeſt accent, "the ſuperior magnificence and "more extenſive utility of which you ſo "proudly boaſt; yet, in my humble walk, "I am not void of a praiſe, leſs ſhining,

" but not leſs ſolid than yours. The
" nymph of this peaceful valley, ren-
" dered more fertile and beautiful by my
" ſtream; the neighbouring ſylvan deities,
" to whoſe pleaſure I contribute, will
" pay a grateful teſtimony to my merit.
" The windings of my courſe, which you
" ſo much blame, ſerve to diffuſe over a
" greater extent of ground the refreſh-
" ment of my waters; and the lovers of
" nature and the Muſes, who are fond of
" ſtraying on my banks, are better pleaſed
" that the line of beauty marks my way,
" than if, like yours, it were directed in a
" ſtraight, unvaried line. They prize the
" irregular wildneſs with which I am
" decked, as the charms of beauteous ſim-
" plicity. What you call the weeds which
" darken and obſcure my waves, afford
" to the botaniſt a pleaſing ſpeculation of
" the works of nature; and the poet and
" painter think the luſtre of my ſtream

" greatly

" greatly improved by glittering through
" them. The pebbles which diverſify
" my bottom, and make theſe ripplings
" in my current, are pleaſing objects to
" the eye of taſte; and my ſimple mur-
" murs are more melodious to the learned
" ear, than all the rude noiſes of your
" banks, or even the muſic that reſounds
" from your ſtately barges. If the un-
" feeling ſons of wealth and commerce
" judge of me by the mere ſtandard of
" uſefulneſs, I may claim no undiſtin-
" guiſhed rank. While your waters, con-
" fined in deep channels, or lifted above
" the valleys, roll on, a uſeleſs burden to
" the fields, and only ſubſervient to the
" drudgery of bearing temporary mer-
" chandiſes, my ſtream will beſtow un-
" varying fertility on the meadows, du-
" ring the ſummers of future ages. Yet
" I ſcorn to ſubmit my honours to the
" deciſion of thoſe, whoſe hearts are ſhut

" up to taſte and ſentiment. Let me ap-
" peal to nobler judges. The philoſopher
" and poet, by whoſe labours the human
" mind is elevated and refined, and
" opened to pleaſures beyond the con-
" ception of vulgar ſouls, will acknow-
" ledge that the elegant deities who pre-
" ſide over ſimple and natural beauty,
'have inſpired them with their charm-
" ing and inſtructive ideas. The ſweeteſt
" and moſt majeſtic bard that ever ſung,
" has taken a pride in owning his af-
" fection to woods and ſtreams; and
" while the ſtupendous monuments of
" Roman grandeur, the columns which
" pierced the ſkies, and the aqueducts
" which poured their waves over moun-
" tains and valleys, are ſunk in oblivion,
" the gently winding Mincius ſtill re-
" tains his tranquil honours. And when
" thy glories, proud Genius! are loſt and
" forgotten; when the flood of com-
" merce,

" merce, which now ſupplies thy urn, is
" turned into another courſe, and has
" left thy channel dry and deſolate; the
" ſoftly-flowing Avon ſhall ſtill murmur
" in ſong, and his banks receive the
" homage of all who are beloved by
" Phœbus and the Muſes."

ON

MONASTIC INSTITUTIONS.

I HAPPENED the other day to take a ſolitary walk amongſt the venerable ruins of an old Abbey. The ſtillneſs and ſolemnity of the place were favourable to thought, and naturally led me to a train of ideas relative to the ſcene; when, like a good proteſtant, I began to indulge a ſecret triumph in the ruin of ſo many ſtructures which I had always conſidered

ſidered as the haunts of ignorance an ſuperſtition.

Ye are fallen, ſaid I, ye dark and gloomy manſions of miſtaken zeal, where the proud prieſt and lazy monk fattened upon the riches of the land, and crept like vermin from their cells to ſpread their poiſonous doctrines through the nation, and diſturb the peace of kings. Obſcure in their origin, but daring and ambitious in their guilt! See how the pure light of heaven is clouded by the dim glaſs of the arched window, ſtained with the gaudy colours of monkiſh tales and legendary fiction; fit emblem how reluctantly they admitted the fairer light of truth amidſt theſe dark receſſes, and how much they have debaſed its genuine luſtre! The low cells, the long and narrow aiſles, the gloomy arches, the damp and ſecret caverns which wind beneath

neath the hollow ground, far from impreſſing on the mind the idea of the God of truth and love, ſeem only fit for thoſe dark places of the earth in which are the habitations of cruelty. Theſe maſſy ſtones and ſcattered reliques of the vaſt edifice, like the large bones and gigantic armour of a once formidable ruffian, produce emotions of mingled dread and exultation. Farewel, ye once venerated ſeats! enough of you remains, and may it always remain, to remind us from what we have eſcaped, and make poſterity for ever thankful for this fairer age of liberty and light.

Such were for a while my meditations; but it is cruel to inſult a fallen enemy, and I gradually fell into a different train of thought. I began to conſider whether ſomething might not be advanced in favour of theſe inſtitutions during the barbarous

barous ages in which they flouriſhed; and though they have been productive of much miſchief and ſuperſtition, whether they might not have ſpread the glimmering of a feeble ray of knowledge, through that thick night which once involved the weſtern hemiſphere.

AND where, indeed, could the precious remains of claſſical learning, and the divine monuments of ancient taſte, have been ſafely lodged amidſt the ravages of that age of ferocity and rapine which ſucceeded the deſolation of the Roman empire, except in ſanctuaries like theſe, conſecrated by the ſuperſtition of the times beyond their intrinſic merit? The frequency of wars, and the licentious cruelty with which they were conducted, left neither the hamlet of the peaſant nor the caſtle of the baron free from depredation; but the church and monaſtery generally remained

remained inviolate. There Homer and Ariſtotle were obliged to ſhroud their heads from the rage of gothic ignorance; and there the ſacred records of divine truth were preſerved, like treaſure hid in the earth in troubleſome times, ſafe, but unenjoyed. Some of the barbarous nations were converted before their conqueſts, and moſt of them ſoon after their ſettlement in the countries they over-ran. Thoſe buildings which their new faith taught them to venerate, afforded a ſhelter for thoſe valuable manuſcripts, which muſt otherwiſe have been deſtroyed in the common wreck. At the revival of learning, they were produced from their dormitories. A copy of the pandect of Juſtinian, that valuable remain of Roman law, which firſt gave to Europe the idea of a more perfect juriſprudence, and gave men a reliſh for a new and important ſtudy, was diſcovered in a monaſtery of Amalphi.

Amalphi. Moſt of the claſſics were recovered by the ſame means; and to this it is owing, to the books and learning preſerved in theſe repoſitories, that we were not obliged to begin anew, and trace every art by ſlow and uncertain ſteps from its firſt origin. Science, already full grown and vigorous, awaked as from a trance, ſhook her pinions, and ſoon ſoared to the heights of knowledge.

Nor was ſhe entirely idle during her receſs; at leaſt we cannot but confeſs that what little learning remained in the world was amongſt the prieſts and religious orders. Books, before the invention of paper, and the art of printing, were ſo dear, that few private perſons poſſeſſed any. The only libraries were in convents; and the monks were often employed in tranſcribing manuſcripts, which was a very tedious, and at that time

time a very neceſſary taſk. It was frequently enjoined as a penance for ſome ſlight offence, or given as an exerciſe to the younger part of the community. The monks were obliged by their rules to ſpend ſome ſtated hours every day in reading and ſtudy; nor was any one to be choſen abbot without a competent ſhare of learning. They were the only hiſtorians; and though their accounts be interwoven with many a legendary tale, and darkened by much ſuperſtition, ſtill they are better than no hiſtories at all; and we cannot but think ourſelves obliged to them for tranſmitting to us, in any dreſs, the annals of their country.

They were likewiſe almoſt the ſole inſtructors of youth. Towards the end of the tenth century, there were no ſchools in Europe but the monaſteries, and thoſe which belonged to epiſcopal reſidences; nor

nor any maſters but the Benedictines. It is true, their courſe of education extended no further than what they called the ſeven liberal arts, and theſe were taught in a very dry and unintereſting manner. But this was the genius of the age, and it ſhould not be imputed to them as a reproach that they did not teach well, when no one taught better. We are guilty of great unfairneſs when we compare the ſchool-men with the philoſophers of a more enlightened age: we ſhould contraſt them with thoſe of their own times; with a high-conſtable of France who could not read; with kings who made the ſign of the croſs in confirmation of their charters, becauſe they could not write their names, with a whole people without the leaſt glimmering of taſte or literature. However was their real knowledge, there was a much greater difference between the men of learning, and the reſt of the world,

that time, than there is at preſent; and certainly, ſome of the diſciples of thoſe ſchools who, though now fallen into diſrepute, were revered in their day by the names of the ſubtle, or the angelic doctors, ſhewed an acuteneſs and ſtrength of genius, which, if properly directed, would have gone far in philoſophy; and they only failed becauſe their enquiries were not the objects of the human powers. Had they exerciſed half that acuteneſs on facts and experiments, they had been truly great men. However, there were not wanting ſome, even in the darkeſt ages, whoſe names will be always remembered with pleaſure by the lovers of ſcience. Alcuin, the preceptor of Charlemagne, the firſt who introduced a taſte for polite literature into France, and the chief inſtrument that prince made uſe of in his noble endeavours for the encouragement of learning; to whom the univerſities of

Soiſſons,

Soiſſons, Tours and Paris owe their origin: the hiſtorians, Mathew Paris, William of Malmſbury; Savanarola; the elegant and unfortunate Abelard; and, to crown the reſt, the Engliſh Franciſcan, Roger Bacon.

It may be here obſerved, that forbidding the vulgar tongue in the offices of devotion, and in reading the ſcriptures, though undoubtedly a great corruption in the Chriſtian Church, was of infinite ſervice to the intereſts of learning. When the eccleſiaſtics had locked up their religion in a foreign tongue, they would take care not to loſe the key. This gave an importance to the learned languages; and every ſcholar could not only read, but wrote and diſputed in Latin, which without ſuch a motive would probably have been no more ſtudied than the Chineſe. And at a time when the modern lan-

guages of Europe were yet unformed and barbarous, Latin was of great uſe as a kind of univerſal tongue, by which learned men might converſe and correſpond with each other.

INDEED the monks were almoſt the only ſet of men who had leiſure or opportunity to pay the leaſt attention to literary ſubjects. A learned education (and a very little went to that title) was reckoned peculiar to the religious. It was almoſt eſteemed a blemiſh on the ſavage and martial character of the gentry, to have any tincture of letters. A man, therefore, of a ſtudious and retired turn, averſe to quarrels, and not deſirous of the fierce and ſanguinary glory of thoſe times, beheld in the cloiſter a peaceful and honourable ſanctuary; where, without the reproach of cowardice, or danger of invaſion, he might devote himſelf to

learning, aſſociate with men of his own turn, and have free acceſs to libraries and manuſcripts. In this enlightened and poliſhed age, where learning is diffuſed through every rank, and many a merchant's clerk poſſeſſes more real knowledge than half the literati of that æra, we can ſcarcely conceive how groſs an ignorance overſpread thoſe times, and how totally all uſeful learning might have been loſt amongſt us, had it not been for an order of men, veſted with peculiar privileges, and protected by even a ſuperſtitious degree of reverence.

Thus the Muſes, with their attendant arts, in ſtrange diſguiſe indeed, and uncouth trappings, took refuge in the peaceful gloom of the convent. Statuary carved a madonna or a crucifix; Painting illuminated a miſſal; Eloquence made the panegyric of a ſaint; and Hiſtory com-

poſed a legend. Yet ſtill they breathed, and were ready, at any happier period, to emerge from obſcurity with all their native charms and undiminiſhed luſtre.

But there were other views in which thoſe who devoted themſelves to a monaſtic life might be ſuppoſed uſeful to ſociety. They were often employed either in cultivating their gardens, or in curious mechanical works; as indeed the nuns are ſtill famous for many elegant and ingenious manufactures. By the conſtant communication they had with thoſe of their own order, and with their common head at Rome, they maintained ſome intercourſe between nations at a time when travelling was dangerous, and commerce had not, as now, made the moſt diſtant parts of the globe familiar to each other: and they kept up a more intimate bond of union amongſt learned men of all countries,

tries, who would otherwiſe have been ſecluded from all knowledge of each other. A monk might travel with more convenience than any one elſe; his perſon was ſafer, and he was ſure of meeting with proper accommodations. The intercourſe with Rome muſt have been peculiarly favourable to theſe northern nations; as Italy for a long time led the way in every improvement of politeneſs or literature: and if we imported their ſuperſtition, we likewiſe imported their manufactures, their knowledge, and their taſte. Thus Alfred ſent for Italian monks, when he wanted to civilize his people, and introduce amongſt them ſome tincture of letters. It may likewiſe be preſumed that they tempered the rigour of monarchy. Indeed they, as well as the ſovereigns, endeavoured to enſlave the people; but ſubjection was not likely to be ſo abject and unlimited where the object of it was divided, and

each ſhowed by turns that the other might be oppoſed. It muſt have been of ſervice to the cauſe of liberty to have a ſet of men, whoſe laws, privileges, and immunities the moſt daring kings were afraid to trample on; and this, before a more enlightened ſpirit of freedom had ariſen, might have its effect in preventing the ſtates of chriſtendom from falling into ſuch entire ſlavery as the Aſiatics.

SUCH an order would in ſome degree check the exceſſive regard paid to birth. A man of mean origin and obſcure parentage ſaw himſelf excluded from almoſt every path of ſecular preferment, and almoſt treated as a being of an inferior ſpecies by the high and haughty ſpirit of the gentry; but he was at liberty to aſpire to the higheſt dignities of the church; and there have been many who, like Sextus V. and cardinal Wolſey, have by their induſtry

induſtry and perſonal merit alone raiſed themſelves to a level with kings.

It ſhould likewiſe be remembered that many of the orders were charitable inſtitutions; as the *knights of faith and charity* in the thirteenth century, who were aſſociated for the purpoſe of ſuppreſſing thoſe bands of robbers which infeſted the public roads in France; the *brethren of the order of the redemption*, for redeeming ſlaves from the Mahometans; the *order of St. Anthony*, firſt eſtabliſhed for the relief of the poor under certain diſorders; and the *brethren and ſiſters of the pious and chriſtian ſchools*, for educating poor children. Theſe ſupplied the place of hoſpitals and other ſuch foundations, which are now eſtabliſhed on the broader baſis of public benevolence. To bind up the wounds of the ſtranger, was peculiarly the office of the inhabitants of

the convent; and they often ſhared the charities they received. The exerciſe of hoſpitality is ſtill their characteriſtic, and muſt have been of particular uſe formerly, when there were not the conveniences and accommodations for travelling which we now enjoy. The learned ſtranger was always ſure of an agreeable reſidence amongſt them; and as they all underſtood Latin, they ſerved him for interpreters, and introduced him to a ſight of whatever was curious or valuable in the countries which he viſited. They checked the ſpirit of ſavage fierceneſs, to which our warlike anceſtors were ſo prone, with the mildneſs and ſanctity of religious influences; they preſerved ſome reſpect to law and order, and often decided controverſies by means leſs bloody than the ſword, though confeſſedly more ſuperſtitious.

A PROOF that theſe inſtitutions had a favourable

favourable aſpect towards civilization, may be drawn from a late hiſtory of Ireland. "Soon after the introduction of "chriſtianity into that kingdom," ſays Dr. Leland, "the monks fixed their ha- "bitations in deſarts, which they culti- "vated with their own hands, and ren- "dered the moſt delightful ſpots in the "kingdom. Theſe deſarts became well "policed cities, and it is remarkable "enough, that to the monks we owe ſo "uſeful an inſtitution in Ireland as the "bringing great numbers together into "one civil community. In theſe cities "the monks ſet up ſchools, and taught, "not only the youth of Ireland, but "the neighbouring nations; furniſhing "them alſo with books. They became "umpires between contending chiefs, "and when they could not confine them "within the bounds of reaſon and reli- "gion, at leaſt terrified them by denoun-

" cing divine vengeance againſt their " exceſſes."

LET it be conſidered too, that when the minds of men began to open, ſome of the moſt eminent reformers ſprung from the boſom of the church, and even of the convent. It was not the laity who began to think. The eccleſiaſtics were the firſt to perceive the errors they had introduced. The church was reformed from within, not from without; and like the ſilk-worm, when ripened in their cells to maturer vigour and perfection, they pierced the cloud themſelves had ſpun, and within which they had ſo long been enveloped.

AND let not the good proteſtant be too much ſtartled if I here venture to inſinuate, that the monaſteries were ſchools of ſome high and reſpectable virtues. Poverty,

ty, chaſtity, and a renunciation of the world, were certainly intended in the firſt plan of theſe inſtitutions; and though, from the unavoidable frailty of human nature, they were not always obſerved, certain it is, that many individuals amongſt them have been ſtriking examples of the ſelf-denying virtues: and as the influence they acquired was only built upon the voluntary homage of the mind, it may be preſumed ſuch an aſcendancy was not originally gained without ſome ſpecies of merit. The foundeſs for monkery is eaſily deduced from ſome of the beſt principles in the human heart. It was indeed neceſſity, that in the third century firſt drove the chriſtians to ſhelter themſelves from the Decian perſecution in the ſolitary deſarts of Thebais, but the humour ſoon ſpread, and numbers under the name of hermits, or eremites, ſecluded themſelves from the commerce

merce of mankind, chooſing the wildeſt ſolitudes, living in caves and hollows of the rocks, and ſubſiſting on ſuch roots and herbs as the ground afforded them. About the fourth century they were gathered into communities, and increaſed with ſurpriſing rapidity. It was then that, by a great and ſudden revolution, the fury of perſecution had ceaſed, and the governing powers were become friendly to chriſtianity. But the agitation of men's minds did not immediately ſubſide with the ſtorm. The chriſtians had ſo long experienced the neceſſity of reſigning all the enjoyments of life, and were ſo detached from every tie which might interfere with the profeſſion of their faith, that upon a more favourable turn of affairs they hardly dared open their minds to pleaſurable emotions. They thought the life of a good man muſt be a continual warfare between mind and body; and having been long

long uſed to ſee eaſe and ſafety on the one ſide, and virtue on the other, no wonder if the aſſociation was ſo ſtrong in their minds, as to ſuggeſt the neceſſity of voluntary mortification, and lead them to inflict thoſe ſufferings upon themſelves, which they no longer apprehended from others. They had continually experienced the amazing effects of chriſtianity in ſupporting its followers under hardſhip, tortures, and death; and they thought little of its influence in regulating the common behaviour of life, if it produced none of thoſe great exertions they had been uſed to contemplate. They were ſtruck with the change from heathen licentiouſneſs to the purity of the goſpel; and thought they could never be far enough removed from that bondage of the ſenſes which it had juſt coſt them ſo violent a ſtruggle to eſcape. The minds of men were working with newly-received opinions, not yet mellowed

mellowed into a rational faith; and the young converts, aſtoniſhed at the grandeur and ſublimity of the doctrines which then firſt entered their hearts with irreſiſtable force, thought them worthy to engroſs their whole attention. The myſtic dreams of the Platoniſt mingled with the enthuſiaſm of the martyr; and it ſoon became the prevailing opinion, that ſilence, ſolitude, and contemplation, were neceſſary for the reception of divine truth. Miſtaken ideas prevailed of a purity and perfection far ſuperior to the rules of common life, which was only to be attained by thoſe who denied themſelves all the indulgences of ſenſe; and thus the aſcetic ſeverities of the cloiſter ſucceeded in ſome degree to the philoſophic poverty of the Cynic ſchool, and the lofty virtues of the Stoic porch.

INDEED, it is now the prevailing taſte in

in morals to decry every obſervance which has the leaſt appearance of rigour; and to inſiſt only on the ſofter virtues. But let it be remembered, that ſelf-command and ſelf-denial are as neceſſary to the practice of benevolence, charity, and compaſſion, as to any other duty; that it is impoſſible to live to others without denying ourſelves; and that the man who has not learned to curb his appetites and paſſions is ill qualified for thoſe ſacrifices which the friendly affections are continually requiring of him. The man who has that one quality of ſelf-command will find little difficulty in the practice of any other duty; as, on the contrary, he who has it not, tho' poſſeſſed of the gentleſt feelings, and moſt refined ſenſibilities, will ſoon find his benevolence ſink into a mere companionable eaſineſs of temper, neither uſeful to others nor happy for himſelf. A noble enthuſiaſm is ſometimes of uſe

to ſhow how far human nature can go. Though it may not be proper, or deſirable, that numbers ſhould ſeclude themſelves from the common duties and ordinary avocations of life, for the auſterer leſſons of the cloiſter, yet it is not unuſeful that ſome ſhould puſh their virtues to even a romantic height; and it is encouraging to reflect in the hour of temptation, that the love of eaſe, the averſion to pain, every appetite and paſſion, and even the ſtrongeſt propenſities in our nature, have been controuled; that the empire of the mind over the body has been aſſerted in its fulleſt extent; and that there have been men in all ages capable of voluntarily renouncing all the world offers, voluntarily ſuffering all it dreads, and living independent, and unconnected with it. Nor was it a ſmall advantage, or ill calculated to ſupport the dignity of ſcience, that a learned man might be reſpectable in a coarſe gown,

a lea-

a leathern girdle, and bare-footed. Cardinal Ximenes preſerved the ſevere ſimplicity of a convent amidſt the pomp and luxury of palaces; and to thoſe who thus thought it becoming in the higheſt ſtations to affect the appearance of poverty, the reality ſurely could not be very dreadful.

THERE is yet another light in which theſe inſtitutions may be conſidered. It is ſurely not improper to provide a retreat for thoſe who, ſtained by ſome deep and enormous crime, wiſh to expiate by ſevere and uncommon penitence thoſe offences which render them unworthy of freer commerce with the world. Repentance is never ſo ſecure from a relapſe as when it breaks off at once from every former connection, and entering upon a new courſe of life, bids adieu to every object that might revive the idea of temp-

tations which have once prevailed. In theſe ſolemn retreats, the ſtillneſs and acknowledged ſanctity of the place, with the ſtriking novelty of every thing around them, might have great influence in calming the paſſions; might break the force of habit, and ſuddenly induce a new turn of thinking. There are likewiſe afflictions ſo overwhelming to humanity, that they leave no reliſh in the mind for any thing elſe than to enjoy its own melancholy in ſilence and ſolitude; and to a heart torn with remorſe, or oppreſt with ſorrow, the gloomy ſeverities of La Trappe are really a relief. Retirement is alſo the favourite wiſh of age. Many a ſtateſman, and many a warrior, ſick of the buſtle of that world to which they had devoted the prime of their days, have longed for ſome quiet cell, where, like cardinal Wolſey, or Charles the Fifth, they might ſhroud their grey hairs, and loſe

ſight of the follies with which they had been too much tainted.

THOUGH there is, perhaps, leſs to plead for immuring beauty in a cloiſter, and confining that part of the ſpecies who are formed to ſhine in families and ſweeten ſociety, to the barren duties and auſtere diſcipline of a monaſtic life; yet circumſtances might occur, in which they would, even to a woman, be a welcome refuge. A young female, whom accident or war had deprived of her natural protectors, muſt, in an age of barbariſm, be peculiarly expoſed and helpleſs. A convent offered her an aſylum where ſhe might be ſafe, at leaſt, if not happy; and add to the conſciouſneſs of unviolated virtue the flattering dreams of angelic purity and perfection. There were orders, as well amongſt the women as the men, inſtituted for charitable pur-

poſes, ſuch as that of the *Virgins of love*, or *Daughters of mercy*, founded in 1660, for the relief of the ſick poor; with others for inſtructing their children. Theſe muſt have been peculiarly ſuited to the ſoftneſs and compaſſion of the ſex, and to this it is no doubt owing, that ſtill, in catholic countries, ladies of the higheſt rank often viſit the hoſpitals and houſes of the poor; waiting on them with the moſt tender aſſiduity, and performing ſuch offices as our proteſtant ladies would be ſhocked at the thoughts of. We ſhould alſo conſider, that moſt of the females who now take the veil, are ſuch as have no agreeable proſpects in life. Why ſhould not theſe be allowed to quit a world which will never miſs them? It is eaſier to retire from the public, than to ſupport its diſregard. The convent is to them a ſhelter from poverty and neglect. Their little community grows dear to them.

them. The equality which ſubſiſts among theſe ſiſters of obſcurity, the ſimilarity of their fate, the peace, the leiſure they enjoy, give riſe to the moſt endearing friendſhips. Their innocence is ſhielded by the ſimplicity of their life from even the idea of ill; and they are flattered by the notion of a voluntary renunciation of pleaſures, which, probably, had they continued in the world, they would have had little ſhare in.

After all that can be ſaid, we have reaſon enough to rejoice that the ſuperſtitions of former times are now fallen into diſrepute. What might be a palliative at one time, ſoon became a crying evil in itſelf. When the fuller day of ſcience began to dawn, the monkiſh orders were willing to exclude its brightneſs, that the dim lamp might ſtill glimmer in their cell. Their growing vices

have rendered them juſtly odious to ſociety, and they ſeem in a fair way of being for ever aboliſhed. But may we not ſtill hope that the world was better than it would have been without them; and that he, who knows to bring good out of evil, has made them, in their day, ſubſervient to ſome uſeful purpoſes. The corruptions of chriſtianity, which have been accumulating for ſo many ages, ſeem to be now gradually clearing away, and ſome future period may perhaps exhibit our religion in all its native ſimplicity.

So the pure limpid ſtream, when foul with ſtains
Of ruſhing torrents, and deſcending rains;
Works itſelf clear, and as it runs refines,
Till by degrees the floating mirror ſhines;
Reflects each flower that on its borders grows,
And a new heaven in its fair boſom ſhews.

ON THE

PLEASURE

DERIVED FROM

OBJECTS OF TERROR;

WITH

SIR BERTRAND,

A FRAGMENT.

THAT the exerciſe of our benevolent feelings, as called forth by the view of human afflictions, ſhould be a ſource of pleaſure, cannot appear wonderful to one who conſiders that relation between the moral and natural ſyſtem of man,

which has connected a degree of ſatisfaction with every action or emotion productive of the general welfare. The painful ſenſation immediately ariſing from a ſcene of miſery, is ſo much ſoftened and alleviated by the reflex ſenſe of ſelf-approbation attending virtuous ſympathy, that we find, on the whole, a very exquiſite and refined pleaſure remaining, which makes us deſirous of again being witneſſes to ſuch ſcenes, inſtead of flying from them with diſguſt and horror. It is obvious how greatly ſuch a proviſion muſt conduce to the ends of mutual ſupport and aſſiſtance. But the apparent delight with which we dwell upon objects of pure terror, where our moral feelings are not in the leaſt concerned, and no paſſion ſeems to be excited but the depreſſing one of fear, is a paradox of the heart, much more difficult of ſolution.

THE reality of this ſource of pleaſure ſeems evident from daily obſervation. The greedineſs with which the tales of ghoſts and goblins, of murders, earthquakes, fires, ſhipwrecks, and all the moſt terrible diſaſters attending human life, are devoured by every ear, muſt have been generally remarked. Tragedy, the moſt favourite work of fiction, has taken a full ſhare of thoſe ſcenes; "it has ſupt full with horrors," and has, perhaps, been more indebted to them for public admiration than to its tender and pathetic part. The ghoſt of Hamlet, Macbeth deſcending into the witches' cave, and the tent ſcene in Richard, command as forcibly the attention of our ſouls as the parting of Jaffier and Belvidera, the fall of Wolſey, or the death of Shore. The inſpiration of *terror* was by the ancient critics aſſigned as the peculiar province of tragedy; and the Greek

Greek and Roman tragedians have introduced ſome extraordinary perſonages for this purpoſe: not only the ſhades of the dead, but the furies, and other fabulous inhabitants of the infernal regions. Collins, in his moſt poetical ode to Fear, has finely enforced this idea.

Tho' gentle Pity claim her mingled part,
Yet all the thunders of the ſcene are thine.

THE old Gothic romance and the Eaſtern tale, with their genii, giants, enchantments, and transformations, however a refined critic may cenſure them as abſurd and extravagant, will ever retain a moſt powerful influence on the mind, and intereſt the reader, independently of all peculiarity of taſte. Thus the great Milton, who had a ſtrong bias to theſe wildneſſes of the imagination, has, with ſtriking effect, made the ſtories "of foreſts and enchantments drear," a favourite

favourite ſubject with his *Penſeroſo*; and had undoubtedly their awakening images ſtrong upon his mind when he breaks out,

> Call up him that left half-told
> The ſtory of Cambuſcan bold; &c.

How are we then to account for the pleaſure derived from ſuch objects? I have often been led to imagine that there is a deception in theſe caſes; and that the avidity with which we attend is not a proof of our receiving real pleaſure. The pain of ſuſpenſe, and the irreſiſtible deſire of ſatisfying curioſity, when once raiſed, will account for our eagerneſs to go quite through an adventure, though we ſuffer actual pain during the whole courſe of it. We rather chooſe to ſuffer the ſmart pang of a violent emotion than the uneaſy craving of an unſatisfied deſire. That this principle, in many inſtances, may involuntarily carry us through what

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we diſlike, I am convinced from experience. This is the impulſe which renders the pooreſt and moſt inſipid narrative intereſting when once we get fairly into it; and I have frequently felt it with regard to our modern novels, which, if lying on my table, and taken up in an idle hour, have led me through the moſt tedious and diſguſting pages, while, like Piſtol eating his leek, I have ſwallowed and execrated to the end. And it will not only force us through dulneſs, but through actual torture—through the relation of a Damien's execution, or an inquiſitor's act of faith. When children, therefore, liſten with pale and mute attention to the frightful ſtories of apparitions, we are not, perhaps, to imagine that they are in a ſtate of enjoyment, any more than the poor bird which is dropping into the mouth of the rattleſnake; they are chained by the ears, and faſcinated by curioſity.

curioſity. This ſolution, however, does not ſatisfy me with reſpect to the well-wrought ſcenes of artificial terror which are formed by a ſublime and vigorous imagination. Here, though we know before-hand what to expect, we enter into them with eagerneſs, in queſt of a pleaſure already experienced. This is the pleaſure conſtantly attached to the excitement of ſurpriſe from new and wonderful objects. A ſtrange and unexpected event awakens the mind, and keeps it on the ſtretch; and where the agency of inviſible beings is introduced, of "forms unſeen, and mightier far than we," our imagination, darting forth, explores with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expanſion of its powers. Paſſion and fancy co-operating, elevate the ſoul to its higheſt pitch; and the pain of terror is loſt in amazement.

HENCE,

HENCE, the more wild, fanciful, and extraordinary are the circumſtances of a ſcene of horror, the more pleaſure we receive from it; and where they are too near common nature, though violently borne by curioſity through the adventure, we cannot repeat it, or reflect on it, without an over-balance of pain. In the *Arabian Nights* are many moſt ſtriking examples of the terrible, joined with the marvellous: the ſtory of Aladdin, and the travels of Sinbad, are particularly excellent. The *Caſtle of Otranto* is a very ſpirited modern attempt upon the ſame plan of mixed terror, adapted to the model of Gothic romance. The beſt conceived, and the moſt ſtrongly worked-up ſcene of mere natural horror that I recollect, is in Smolett's *Ferdinand Count Fathom*; where the hero, entertained in a lone houſe in a foreſt, finds a corpſe juſt ſlaughtered in the room where he is ſent

to

to ſleep, and the door of which is locked upon him. It may be amuſing for the reader to compare his feelings upon theſe, and from thence form his opinion of the juſtneſs of my theory. The following fragment, in which both theſe manners are attempted to be in ſome degree united, is offered to entertain a ſolitary winter's evening.

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. . . . . AFTER this adventure, Sir Bertrand turned his ſteed towards the wolds, hoping to croſs theſe dreary moors before the curfew. But ere he had proceeded half his journey, he was bewildered by the different tracks, and not being able, as far as the eye could reach, to eſpy any object but the brown heath ſurrounding him, he was at length quite uncertain which

which way he ſhould direct his courſe. Night overtook him in this ſituation. It was one of thoſe nights when the moon gives a faint glimmering of light through the thick black clouds of a lowering ſky. Now and then ſhe ſuddenly emerged in full ſplendor from her veil; and then inſtantly retired behind it, having juſt ſerved to give the forlorn Sir Bertrand a wide extended proſpect over the deſolate waſte. Hope and native courage a while urged him to puſh forwards, but at length the increaſing darkneſs and fatigue of body and mind overcame him; he dreaded moving from the ground he ſtood on, for fear of unknown pits and bogs, and alighting from his horſe in deſpair, he threw himſelf on the ground. He had not long continued in that poſture when the ſullen toll of a diſtant bell ſtruck his ears—he ſtarted up, and, turning towards the ſound, diſcerned a dim twinkling light.

Inſtantly

Inſtantly he ſeized his horſe's bridle, and with cautious ſteps advanced towards it. After a painful march, he was ſtopt by a moated ditch ſurrounding the place from whence the light proceeded; and by a momentary glimpſe of moon-light he had a full view of a large antique manſion, with turrets at the corners, and an ample porch in the center. The injuries of time were ſtrongly marked on every thing about it. The roof in various places was fallen in, the battlements were half demoliſhed, and the windows broken and diſmantled. A draw-bridge, with a ruinous gate-way at each end, led to the court before the building. He entered, and inſtantly the light, which proceeded from a window in one of the turrets, glided along and vaniſhed; at the ſame moment the moon ſunk beneath a black cloud, and the night was darker than ever. All was ſilent. Sir Bertrand faſtened his ſteed

under a ſhed, and approaching the houſe, traverſed its whole front with light and ſlow footſteps. All was ſtill as death. He looked in at the lower windows, but could not diſtinguiſh a ſingle object through the impenetrable gloom. After a ſhort parley with himſelf, he entered the porch, and ſeizing a maſſy iron knocker at the gate, lifted it up, and heſitating, at length ſtruck a loud ſtroke. The noiſe reſounded through the whole manſion with hollow echoes. All was ſtill again. He repeated the ſtrokes more boldly, and louder—another interval of ſilence enſued. A third time he knocked, and a third time all was ſtill. He then fell back to ſome diſtance, that he might diſcern whether any light could be ſeen in the whole front. It again appeared in the ſame place, and quickly glided away as before. At the ſame inſtant, a deep ſullen toll

toll ſounded from the turret. Sir Bertrand's heart made a fearful ſtop—He was a while motionleſs; then terror impelled him to make ſome haſty ſteps towards his ſteed; but ſhame ſtopt his flight; and, urged by honour, and a reſiſtleſs deſire of finiſhing the adventure, he returned to the porch; and, working up his ſoul to a full ſteadineſs of reſolution, he drew forth his ſword with one hand, and with the other lifted up the latch of the gate. The heavy door, creeking upon its hinges, reluctantly yielded to his hand—he applied his ſhoulder to it, and forced it open—he quitted it, and ſtept forward—the door inſtantly ſhut with a thundering clap. Sir Bertrand's blood was chilled—he turned back to find the door, and it was long ere his trembling hands could ſeize it—but his utmoſt ſtrength could not open it agin. After

ſeveral ineffectual attempts, he looked behind him, and beheld, acroſs a hall, upon a large ſtaircaſe, a pale bluiſh flame, which caſt a diſmal gleam of light around. He again ſummoned forth his courage, and advanced towards it—It retired. He came to the foot of the ſtairs, and, after a moment's deliberation, aſcended. He went ſlowly up, the flame retiring before him, till he came to a wide gallery—The flame proceeded along it, and he followed in ſilent horror, treading lightly, for the echoes of his footſteps ſtartled him. It led him to the foot of another ſtaircaſe, and then vaniſhed. At the ſame inſtant, another toll ſounded from the turret—Sir Bertrand felt it ſtrike upon his heart. He was now in total darkneſs, and, with his arms extended, began to aſcend the ſecond ſtaircaſe. A dead cold hand met his left hand, and firmly graſped

graſped it, drawing him forcibly forwards—he endeavoured to diſengage himſelf, but could not—he made a furious blow with his ſword, and inſtantly a loud ſhriek pierced his ears, and the dead hand was left powerleſs in his—He dropt it, and ruſhed forwards with a deſperate valour. The ſtairs were narrow and winding, and interrupted by frequent breaches, and looſe fragments of ſtone. The ſtaircaſe grew narrower and narrower, and at length terminated in a low iron grate. Sir Bertrand puſhed it open—it led to an intricate winding paſſage, juſt large enough to admit a perſon upon his hands and knees. A faint glimmering of light ſerved to ſhew the nature of the place. Sir Bertrand entered—A deep hollow groan reſounded from a diſtance through the vault—He went forwards, and proceeding beyond the firſt turning, he diſcerned the ſame blue flame which

had before conducted him. He followed it. The vault, at length, ſuddenly opened into a lofty gallery, in the midſt of which a figure appeared, completely armed, thruſting forwards the bloody ſtump of an arm, with a terrible frown and menacing geſture, and brandiſhing a ſword in his hand. Sir Bertrand undauntedly ſprung forwards; and, aiming a fierce blow at the figure, it inſtantly vaniſhed, letting fall a maſſy iron key. The flame now reſted upon a pair of ample folding doors at the end of the gallery. Sir Bertrand went up to it, and applied the key to a brazen lock. With difficulty he turned the bolt. Inſtantly the doors flew open, and diſcovered a large apartment, at the end of which was a coffin reſted upon a bier, with a taper burning on each ſide of it. Along the room, on both ſides, were gigantic ſtatues of black marble, attired

attired in the Mooriſh habit, and holding enormous ſabres in their right hands. Each of them reared his arm, and advanced one leg forwards as the knight entered; at the ſame moment, the lid of the coffin flew open, and the bell tolled. The flame ſtill glided forwards, and Sir Bertrand reſolutely followed, till he arrived within ſix paces of the coffin. Suddenly, a lady in a ſhroud and black veil roſe up in it, and ſtretched out her arms towards him; at the ſame time, the ſtatues claſhed their ſabres, and advanced. Sir Bertrand flew to the lady, and claſped her in his arms—ſhe threw up her veil, and kiſſed his lips; and inſtantly the whole building ſhook as with an earthquake, and fell aſunder with a horrible craſh. Sir Bertrand was thrown into a ſudden trance, and, on recovering, found himſelf ſeated

on a velvet ſofa, in the moſt magnificent room he had ever ſeen, lighted with innumerable tapers, in luſtres of pure cryſtal. A ſumptuous banquet was ſet in the middle. The doors opening to ſoft muſic, a lady of incomparable beauty, attired with amazing ſplendor, entered, ſurrounded by a troop of gay nymphs, more fair than the Graces. She advanced to the knight, and, falling on her knees, thanked him as her deliverer. The nymphs placed a garland of laurel upon his head, and the lady led him by the hand to the banquet, and ſat beſide him. The nymphs placed themſelves at the table, and a numerous train of ſervants entering, ſerved up the feaſt; delicious muſic playing all the time. Sir Bertrand could not ſpeak for aſtoniſhment: he could only return their honours by courteous looks and geſtures.

geſtures. After the banquet was finiſhed, all retired but the lady, who, leading back the knight to the ſofa, addreſſed him in theſe words: . . . . . .

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ON THE

HEROIC POEM

OF

GONDIBERT.

A PERSON engaged in the purſuit of literary fame muſt be ſeverely mortified on obſerving the very ſpeedy neglect into which writers of high merit ſo frequently fall. The revolution of centuries, the extinction of languages, the vaſt convulſions which agitate a whole people,

people, are cauſes which may well be ſubmitted to in overwhelming an author with oblivion; but that in the ſame country, with little variation of language or manners, the delights of one age ſhould become utter ſtrangers in the next, is ſurely an immaturity of fate which conveys reproach upon the inconſtancy of national taſte. That noble band, the Engliſh poets, have ample reaſon for complaining to what unjuſt guardians they have entruſted their renown. While we crown the ſtatue of Shakeſpeare as the prince of dramatic poets, ſhall we forget the works, and almoſt the names of his contemporaries who poſſeſſed ſo much of a kindred ſpirit? Shall the Italian *Paſtor Fido* and *Amyntas* ſtand high in our eſtimation, and the *Faithful Shepherdeſs*, the moſt beautiful paſtoral that a poet's fancy ever formed, be ſcarcely known amongſt us?

Shall

Shall we feel the fire of heroic poetry in tranſlations from Greece and Rome, and never ſearch for it in the native productions of our own country?

THE capital work of Sir *William D'Avenant*, which I now deſire to call forth from its obſcurity, may well be conſidered as in a ſtate of oblivion, ſince we no where meet with alluſions to it, or quotations from it, in our modern writers; and few, I imagine, even of the profeſſed ſtudents in Engliſh claſſics, would think their taſte diſcredited by confeſſing that they had never read GONDIBERT. A very learned and ingenious critic, in his well-known *diſcourſe upon poetical imitation*, has, indeed, taken notice of this poem; but, though he beſtows all due praiſe upon its author, yet the purpoſe for which it is mentioned being to inſtance an eſſential error, we cannot ſuppoſe that his

his authority has ſerved to gain it more readers. Having very judiciouſly laid it down as a general obſervation, that writers, by ſtudiouſly avoiding the fancied diſgrace of imitation, are apt to fall into improper method, forced conceits, and affected expreſſion; he proceeds to introduce the work in queſtion after the following manner: "And, that "the reader may not ſuſpect me of "aſſerting this without experience, let "me exemplify what has been here ſaid "in the caſe of a very eminent perſon, "who, with all the advantages of art "and nature that could be required "to adorn the true poet, was ruined "by this ſingle error. The perſon I "mean was SIR WILLIAM D'AVENANT, "whoſe *Gondibert* will remain a per-"petual monument of the miſchiefs "which muſt ever ariſe from this af-"fectation of originality in lettered and "polite poets."

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A CONSIDERABLE degree of deference is undoubtedly due to a critic of ſuch acknowledged taſte and abilities; yet, ſince it appears to me, that in this inſtance he writes under the influence of ſyſtem and learned prejudice, I ſhall venture to canvaſs the principles upon which he ſupports his cenſure.

THE *method* of Gondibert is firſt objected to by Dr. Hurd, and upon two accounts. Firſt, that the compaſs of the poem is contracted from the limits of the ancient epic, to thoſe of the dramatic form; and by this means, purſuing a cloſe accelerated plot, the opportunity is loſt of introducing digreſſive ornaments, and of giving that minuteneſs of deſcription which confers an air of reality. Now, ſince the author ſets out with diſavowing the common rules of epic poetry, it is certainly unjuſt to try him by thoſe rules.

That

That effects are not produced which he never deſigned to produce, can be no matter of blame; we have only to examine the juſtneſs of the deſign itſelf. It is wrong to expect incompatible qualities as well in compoſitions as in men. A work cannot at the ſame time poſſeſs force and diffuſiveneſs, rapidity and minuteneſs.

EVERY one who has read Homer without prejudice, will, I doubt not, confeſs that the effects which ſhould reſult from the great events of the ſtory are much broken and impeded by that very minuteneſs of deſcription, and frequency of digreſſion which D'avenant is blamed for rejecting. The mind, warmed by an intereſting narration, either in hiſtory, poetry, or romance, requires the writer to keep up with its exertions, and cannot bear him to flag in his pace, or turn aſide in purſuit of other objects. The proper end

end of epic poetry, according to Dr. Hurd, is *admiration*. This, I imagine, would by no means have been allowed by our author, who ſeems rather to have placed it in intereſting the paſſions, inculcating noble ſentiments, and informing the underſtanding: nor does it anſwer the idea of Horace, who praiſes Homer for his moral leſſons, for teaching

——Quid ſit pulcrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non.

However, a due limitation of ſubject, and ſomething of rapidity in purſuing it, appear very neceſſary to the production of a conſiderable effect, of what kind ſoever; and a pompous diſplay of foreign circumſtances muſt always debilitate more than adorn. It appears an extremely bad compliment to an epic poem, to ſay that its chief beauty lies in the epiſodes. Indeed, epic poetry, as exiſting in the models of antiquity,

antiquity, or their copies, by no means, I think, deſerves the title given by critics, of the higheſt ſpecies of poetical compoſition. The tedious compaſs of the ſubject, the neceſſity of employing ſo large a ſhare of the work in the relation of trifling occurrences for the ſake of connexion, and the frequency of interruptions from collateral matter, inevitably cauſe both the poet's exertions and the reader's attention to intermit; and it is no wonder that Homer, and Virgil too, ſometimes nod over their labours. The author of Gondibert ſeems to have been ſenſible of theſe inconveniences, and upon fair compariſon of the epic and dramatic form, to have preferred the latter, as capable of more ſpirit, and uniform dignity. We ſhall find, however, in reviewing the poem, that he has by no means reſtricted himſelf ſo narrowly as to preclude all ornamental deviations;

and though they may not deſerve the title of epiſodes, yet in his ſhort and unfiniſhed piece, they have all the deſirable effect of a pleaſing variety.

THE ſecond objection which Dr. Hurd brings againſt the *method* of this poem, is the rejection of all ſupernatural agency, or what conſtitutes the *machinery* of the ancient epic poem. But for this the critic himſelf offers a vindication, when he commends the author for not running into the wild fables of the Italian romances, "which had too ſlender a foundation in "the ſerious belief of his age to juſtify a "relation to them." Now, by making this *belief* an eſſential rule of propriety with reſpect to the machinery, an author in an enlightened period, ſuch as that of D'avenant, is, in effect, prohibited from its uſe altogether; for the abſtracted nature of a pure and philoſophical religion

renders it utterly unfit for the purpoſes of poetical fiction. The works of ſuch Chriſtian poets as have attempted to form a ſyſtem of machinery upon the ideas of ſaints, angels, and tutelary ſpirits, will ſufficiently prove that their religion, even with a mixture of popular ſuperſtition, was ill calculated to aſſiſt their imagination. Two writers, whom one would little expect to meet upon the ſame ground, Sir Richard Blackmore and Monſ. Voltaire, have given inſtances of the ſame faulty plan in this reſpect; and nothing in the good Knight's epic labours can more deſerve the attack of ridicule, than the divine miſſion in the Henriade for inſtructing his Majeſty in the ſublime myſteries of tranſubſtantiation.

It was a very juſt charge which Plato brought againſt Homer, that he had greatly contributed to debaſe religion by

the unworthy and abſurd repreſentations he has given of the celeſtial beings, both with reſpect to their power and their juſtice; and this is a fault which the poet muſt always in ſome meaſure be guilty of, when he too familiarly mixes divine agency with human events. Nor does it appear more favourable to the greatneſs of the human perſonages that they are on all occaſions ſo beholden to the immediate interpoſition of divine allies. The refined and judicious Virgil, though he has tolerably kept up the dignity of his Deities, has yet very much lowered his heroes from this cauſe. When we ſee Æneas, the ſon of a Goddeſs, aided by a God, and covered with celeſtial armour, with difficulty vanquiſhing the gallant Turnus, we conclude, that without ſuch odds, the victory muſt have fallen on the other ſide. Under ſuch a ſyſtem of ſupernatural agency, there was no other way

way of exalting a man than making him, like Diomed, war againſt the Gods, or, like Cato, approve a cauſe which they had unjuſtly condemned. Surely, a "*ſober* intermixture of religion" can never be attributed to the ancient epic. The poem of Gondibert is, indeed, without all this mixture of religious machinery, whether it be termed ſober or extravagant. Human means are brought to accompliſh human ends; and Cowley, in his recommendatory lines prefixed to the work, has thus expreſſed his approbation of this part of the plan.

Methinks heroic poeſie till now
Like ſome fantaſtique fairy-land did ſhow;
Gods, Devils, Nymphs, Witches, and Giant's race,
And all but Man, in man's beſt work had place.
Thou, like ſome worthy Knight, with ſacred arms
Doſt drive the Monſters thence, and end the charms:
Inſtead of theſe doſt Men and Manners plant,
The things which that rich ſoil did chiefly want.

We ſhall ſee hereafter, that the author has not neglected to introduce *religious ſentiment*, and that of a more noble and elevated kind than can eaſily be paralleled in poetry.

But as the poet, in the critic's opinion, did too much in baniſhing every thing ſupernatural in the events, ſo he did too little in retaining the fantaſtic notions of love and honour in the characters of his piece, which were derived from the ſame ſource of fiction and romance. There is, however, an eſſential difference between the caſes. Artificial ſentiments, however unnatural at firſt, may, from the operation of particular cauſes, become ſo familiar as to be adopted into the manners of the age. Inſtances of faſhion in ſentiment are almoſt as frequent as of faſhion in dreſs. It is certain that the romantic ideas of love and honour did in fact prevail

vail in a high degree during a conſiderable period of the later ages, owing to cauſes which the ſame ingenious critic has in a very curious manner inveſtigated, in his *letters on Chivalry and Romance.* They gave the leading tone to all poliſhed manners; and gallantry was as ſerious a principle in the Italian courts, as love to their country in the ſtates of Greece or old Rome. Supernatural agency in human events, on the other hand, however commonly pretended, or firmly believed, would never approach one ſtep nearer to reality. After all, the author of Gondibert could not intend to reduce his poem to mere hiſtory; but he choſe to take a poetical licence in the dignity and elevation of his ſentiments, rather than in the marvelloufneſs of its events. He thought he might attribute to the exalted perſonages of courts and camps the ſame nobleneſs of mind which

himſelf, a courtier and a ſoldier, poſſeſſed. If his work be allowed leſs grand and entertaining from the want of ſuch ornaments as thoſe of his predeceſſors are decorated with, it will yet be difficult to ſhew how, at his time, they could have been applied conſiſtently with good ſenſe and improved taſte.

So much in vindication of the general *method* of Sir W. D'avenant's poem. With reſpect to its *execution*, the juſtice of Dr. Hurd's cenſure cannot be controverted. That his ſentiments are frequently far-fetched and affected, and his expreſſion quaint and obſcure, is but too obviouſly apparent; and theſe faults, together with the want of harmony in verſification, will ſufficiently account for the neglect into which the work is fallen, though intereſting in its ſtory, and thick ſown with beauties. Readers who take

up a book merely for the indolent amuſement of a leiſure hour, cannot endure the labour of unharbouring a fine thought from the cover of perplexed expreſſion. The *pleaſure* ariſing from a flowing line, or a rounded period, is more engaging to them, becauſe more eaſily enjoyed, than that from a ſublime or witty conception. The author's faulty *execution*, however, aroſe from a ſource directly contrary to the "dread of imitation." Imitation itſelf led him to it; for almoſt all the models of polite literature exiſting in his own country, and indeed in the other poliſhed nations of Europe, were characterized by the very ſame vitiation of taſte. Among our own writers, it is ſufficient to inſtance Donne, Suckling and Cowley, for this conſtant affectation of wit and uncommon ſentiment, and for a conſequent obſcurity of expreſſion. Yet all theſe, and Sir W. D'avenant, perhaps, in

in a more eminent degree than the reſt, had for great occaſions, above the temptation of trifling, a majeſtic and nervous ſimplicity, both of ſentiment and expreſſion; which, with our more refined taſte and language, we have never been able to equal.

I SHOULD now hope that the reader would ſet out with me upon a nearer inſpection of this poem, with the general *idea* of its being the work of an elevated genius, pregnant with a rich ſtore of free and noble ſentiment, faſhioned by an intimate commerce with the great world, and boldly purſuing an original, but not an unſkilful plan.

THE meaſure choſen for this poem is that which we now almoſt confine to elegy. This choice does not appear very judicious; for, although our elegiac ſtanza poſſeſſes

poſſeſſes a ſtrength and fulneſs which renders it not unſuitable to heroic ſubjects, yet, in a piece of conſiderable length, every returning meaſure muſt become tireſome from its frequent repetitions. And this is not the worſt effect of returning ſtanzas, in a long work. The neceſſity of comprizing a ſentence within the limits of the meaſure is the tyranny of Procruſtes to thought. For the ſake of a diſagreeable uniformity, expreſſion muſt conſtantly be cramped or extended. In general, the latter expedient will be practiſed, as the eaſieſt; and thus both ſentiment and language will be enfeebled by unmeaning expletives. This, indeed, in ſome meaſure, is the effect of rhyme couplets; and ſtill more of the Latin hexameter and pentameter. In our author, a redundancy of thought, running out into parentheſes, ſeems to have been produced, or at leaſt encouraged by the meaſure.

meaſure. But I think he has generally preſerved a force and majeſty of expreſſion.

It would have been highly injudicious for one who has rejected all poetical machinery, to have begun his poem with the ancient form of invoking a Muſe. Indeed, in all modern writers this invocation appears little better than an unmeaning ceremony, practiſed by rote from ancient cuſtom; and very properly makes a part of the *receipt for an epic poem* humourouſly laid down after the exact model of mechanical imitation, in the Spectator. Our author, with ſimple and unaffected dignity, thus opens at once into his ſubject:

Of all the Lombards, by their trophies known,
Who ſought fame ſoon, and had her favour long,
King Aribert beſt ſeem'd to fill the throne,
And bred moſt buſineſs for heroick ſong.

This

THIS conquering monarch, we are ſoon acquainted, was bleſt with an only child, the heroine of the ſtory,

Recorded RHODALIND! whoſe high renown
Who miſs in books not luckily have read;
Or vex'd with living beauties of their own
Have ſhunn'd the wiſe records of lovers dead.

DESCRIPTIONS of female beauty have engaged the powers of poets in every age, who have exhauſted all nature for imagery to heighten their painting; yet the picture has ever been extremely faint and inadequate. Our poet judiciouſly confines his deſcription of Rhodalind to the qualities of her mind, contenting himſelf with general praiſes, though in the high-flown gallantry of the times, of her perſonal charms.

Her looks like empire ſhew'd, great above pride;
Since pride ill counterfeits exceſſive height:
But Nature publiſh'd what ſhe fain would hide,
Who for her deeds, not beauty, lov'd the light.

To

To make her lowly mind's appearance leſs,
She us'd ſome outward greatneſs for diſguiſe;
Eſteem'd as pride the cloyſt'ral lowlineſs,
And thought them proud who even the proud
deſpiſe.

Oppreſſors big with pride, when ſhe appear'd,
Bluſh'd, and believ'd their greatneſs counterfeit;
The lowly thought they them in vain had fear'd;
Found virtue harmleſs, and nought elſe ſo great.

Her mind (ſcarce to her feeble ſex a-kin)
Did as her birth, her right to empire ſhow;
Seem'd careleſs outward, when employ'd within;
Her ſpeech, like lovers watch'd, was kind and low.

THE court of Aribert could not want men of high rank and accompliſhments to pay their devotions at ſuch a ſhrine. Among theſe, "OSWALD the great, and greater GONDIBERT" moved in the moſt exalted ſphere of renown. Theſe noble perſonages

[illegible]

In courts, prince [illegible]
Finer than new [illegible]
Outshin'd bright [illegible]
Yet were his eyes [illegible]

Duke Gondibert was [illegible]
But yet his [illegible]
As if with ill [illegible]
Nor would his [illegible]

The Prince could [illegible]
And in court [illegible]
Not frighted with [illegible]
But as their [illegible]

The Duke would [illegible]
As pleasant [illegible]
For he who [illegible]
Soon his [illegible]

Oswald

Oſwald in throngs the abject people ſought
With humble looks; who ſtill too late will know
They are ambition's quarry, and ſoon caught
When the aſpiring eagle ſtoops ſo low.

The Duke did theſe by ſteady virtue gain;
Which they in action more than precept taſte;
Deeds ſhew the good, and thoſe who goodneſs feign
By ſuch ev'n through their vizards are outfac't.

Oſwald in war was worthily renown'd;
Though gay in courts, coarſely in camps could live;
Judg'd danger ſoon, and firſt was in it found;
Could toil to gain what he with eaſe did give.

Yet toils and dangers through ambition lov'd,
Which does in war the name of virtue own:
But quits that name when from the war remov'd,
As rivers theirs when from their channels gone.

The Duke (as reſtleſs as his fame in war)
With martial toil could Oſwald weary make,
And calmly do what he with rage did dare,
And give ſo much as he might deign to take.

Him

Him as their ſummer ſuns the ſhore;
The court he knew to ſteer in ſtorms of ſtate,
In fields, a battle loſt he could retrieve
And after force the victors to their fate.

Of theſe great rivals, Gondibert was he whom the king had deſigned for his ſon-in-law, and the heir of his throne; and Rhodalind too, in the privacy of her own breaſt, had made the ſame choice. This is related in a manner little inferior to Shakeſpear's famous deſcription of concealed love.

Yet ſadly it is ſung, that ſhe is ſtolen,
Mildly as mourning flowers, love's ſorrows fell;
Whilſt in her ſecret heart, her freſhneſs fades,
As roſes ſilently in lymbecks melt.

Gondibert, however, though of a nature by no means unſuſceptible of the tender paſſion, had not as yet felt it for a particular object; and Oſwald, who ſtood forth as the public ſuitor to the princeſs,

was incited by no other motive than ambition. Not Rhodalind herſelf (ſays the poet)

Could he affect, but ſhining in her throne.

His cauſe was powerfully pleaded with the princeſs by his ſiſter Gartha, with whom we are next brought acquainted. A bold, full, majeſtic beauty; and a correſponding mind, high, reſtleſs, and aſpiring, are her diſtinguiſhing features. The prince and duke were urged on to ambitious purſuits by their reſpective armies, which, juſt returned from conqueſt, lay encamped, the one at Breſcia, and the other at Bergamo. That of Gondibert was compoſed of hardy youth whom he had ſelected from his father's camp, and educated in martial diſcipline under his own inſpection. Temperance, chaſtity, vigilance, humanity, and all the high virtues of chivalry, remarkably diſtinguiſh

diſtinguiſh theſe young ſoldiers from thoſe of later times. Beauty, indeed, commanded no leſs regard amongſt them than in a modern camp; but it was an object of paſſion, and not of appetite; and was the powerful engine in their education which inſpired them with noble and exalted ſentiments. This is an idea on which our author, true to the principles of chivalry, very frequently enlarges, and always with peculiar force and dignity. In the preſent inſtance it is thus finely expreſſed:

But, though the Duke taught rigid diſcipline,
He let them beauty thus at diſtance know;
As prieſts diſcover ſome more ſacred ſhrine,
Which none muſt touch, yet all to it may bow.

When thus, as ſuitors, mourning virgins paſs
Thro' their clean camp, themſelves in form they draw,
That they with martial reverence may grace
Beauty, the ſtranger, which they ſeldom ſaw.

They vayl'd their enſigns as it by did move,
Whilſt inward, as from native conſcience, all
Worſhip'd the poet's darling godhead, Love;
Which grave philoſophers did Nature call.

INDEED, the influence of this paſſion in its pureſt and moſt exalted ſtate during the courſe of education, is a ſubject that might, perhaps, ſhine as much in the hands of a moraliſt as of a poet.

THE ſoldiers of Oſwald were his father's brave veterans, in whoſe arms he had been bred. The ſtory thus opened, and our attention awakened to the expectation of important events, the firſt canto is cloſed.

THE ſecond canto introduces us to a ſolemn annual hunting, held by Duke Gondibert in commemoration of a great victory gained on this day by his grandſire. His train was adorned by many gallant and noble perſons, the friends of his family, and commanders in his army.

The hunting, which is deſcribed with much poetical ſpirit, terminates in a combat. As Gondibert and his party are returning weary homeward, an ancient ranger haſtily brings the tidings that Oſwald, who had lain in ambuſh with a body of choſen horſe, is advancing upon them. The Duke, rejecting all counſels of flight, prepares to receive his foes; and with an account of their principal leaders, and the order of their march, the canto concludes.

A PARLEY between the chiefs now ſucceeds, in which the character of each is well preſerved. Oſwald warmly accuſes his rival for uſurping his claims on the princeſs and the kingdom. Gondibert defends himſelf with temper, and diſavows all ambitious deſigns. The other diſdains accommodation; and the conference ends in a generous agreement to decide their differences in ſingle fight.

When every thing is prepared for the combat, Hubert, the brother of Oſwald, ſteps forth with a general challenge to the oppoſite party. This is inſtantly accepted, and ſerves for a prelude to ſo many others, that a general engagement ſeems likely to enſue; when Oſwald reproves their diſobedient ardour: and, upon Hubert's inſiſting to ſhare his fate from the rights of brotherhood, it is at length decided that three perſons of each party ſhould enter the liſts along with their generals. The duel then comes on, in the fourth canto; in which Oſwald, Hubert, Paradine and Dargonet, are ſeverally matched with Gondibert; Hurgonil, the lover of Orna, the Duke's ſiſter; and Arnold and Hugo, generous rivals in Laura. Deſcriptions of battle are ſo frequent in epic poetry, that ſcarcely any circumſtances of variety are left to diverſify them. Homer and his imitators have attempted novelty

novelty in the multiplicity of their combats by every poſſible variation of weapon, poſture, and wound. They conſidered the human body with anatomical nicety; and dwelt with a ſavage pleaſure upon every idea of pain and horror that ſtudied butchery could excite. I ſhall leave it to the profeſſed admirers of antiquity to determine under what head of poetical beauty ſuch objects are to be ranged. The terrible is certainly a principal ſource of the ſublime; but a ſlaughter-houſe or a ſurgery would not ſeem proper ſtudies for a poet. D'avenant has drawn little from them. His battles are rendered intereſting chiefly by the character and ſituation of the combatants. When Arnold, the favoured lover of Laura, is ſlain by Paradine, Hugo, who had overthrown his antagoniſt, ſprings to avenge his rival, with theſe truly gallant expreſſions:

Vain conqueror, ſaid Hugo then, return!
  Inſtead of laurel, which the victor wears,
Go gather cypreſs for thy brother's urn,
  And learn of me to water it with tears.

Thy brother loſt his life attempting mine;
  Which cannot for Lord Arnold's loſs ſuffice:
I muſt revenge, unlucky Paradine!
  The blood his death will draw from Laura's eyes.

We rivals were in Laura; but, tho' ſhe
  My griefs derided, his with ſighs approv'd,
Yet I, in love's exact integrity,
  Muſt take thy life for killing him ſhe lov'd.

His generoſity, however, was fatal both to his foe and himſelf.

HUBERT, diſabled by a wound in his arm, is diſhonoured by receiving his life from his conqueror; upon which occaſion the poet thus beautifully apoſtrophiſes:

O Honour, frail as life, thy fellow flower!
  Cheriſh'd, and watch'd, and hum'rouſly eſteem'd,
Then worn for ſhort adornments of an hour;
  And is, when loſt, no more than life redeem'd.

THE

THE two chiefs are ſtill left cloſely engaging; and when Hurgonil approaches to aſſiſt his lord, he is warmly commanded to retire. At length, after many mutual wounds, Oſwald falls.

THE death of the Prince at the ſame time takes off all reſtraint from his party, and incites them to revenge. Led by the wounded Hubert, old Vaſco, and Borgio, they attack the hunters, who, beſides the fatigue of the chace, are repreſented as ſomewhat inferior in number. A furious battle, the ſubject of the fifth canto, now enſues. Gondibert ſhines forth in all the ſplendor of a hero. By his proweſs his friends are reſcued, and the oppoſite leaders overthrown in various ſeparate encounters; and by his military ſkill the brave veterans of Oſwald are defeated. The whole deſcription of the battle is warm and animated.

IN

In Gondibert's generous lamentation over the fallen, every heart muſt ſympathize with the following pathetic tribute to the rival lovers:

Brave Arnold and his rival ſtrait remove,
Where Laura ſhall beſtrew their hallow'd ground;
Protectors both, and ornaments of love;
This ſaid, his eyes out wept his wideſt wound.

Tell her now theſe, love's faithful ſaints, are gone,
The beauty they ador'd ſhe ought to hide;
For vainly will love's miracles be ſhewn,
Since lover's faith with theſe brave rivals dy'd.

Say little Hugo never more ſhall mourn,
In noble numbers, her unkind diſdain;
Who now, not ſeeing beauty, feels no ſcorn;
And wanting pleaſure, is exempt from pain.

When ſhe with flowers Lord Arnold's grave ſhall ſtrew,
And hears why Hugo's life was thrown away,
She on that rival's hearſe will drop a few,
Which merits all that April gives to May.

The Duke now draws off his remaining friends towards Bergamo: but on the journey,

journey, overcome by fatigue and loſs of blood, he falls into a deadly ſwoon. His attendants, amidſt their anxiety and confuſion upon this event, are ſurpriſed, in the ſixth canto, with the approach of a ſquadron of horſe. This, however, proves to be a friendly body, led by old Ulfin, who, after recovering the Duke by a cordial, declares himſelf to have been a page to his grandſire, and gives a noble relation of the character and exploits of his great maſter. The rumour of Oſwald's attack brought him to the relief of Gondibert; and we have a deſcription, which will be thought too much bordering upon the ludicrous, of the ſtrange confuſion among his maimed veterans, who in their haſte had ſeized upon each other's artificial limbs. This unſightly troop, with the deficiencies of hands, arms, legs and eyes, can ſcarcely, with all the poet's art, be rendered a re-

ſpectable

ſpectable object. Such inſtances of faulty judgment are frequent in the writings of an age which was characterized by vigour of imagination rather than correctneſs of taſte. Ulfin leads the Duke to the houſe of the ſage Aſtragon, where, with the approach of night, the canto and the firſt book conclude.

In the beginning of the ſecond book, the poet carries us with Hurgonil and Tybalt and their noble dead, to Verona. The diſtant turrets firſt appearing, and then the great objects opening, one by one; the river, the palace, the temple, and the amphitheatre of Flaminius, form a landſcape truly noble and pictureſque. The view of the temple gives occaſion to one of thoſe elevated religious ſentiments which dignify this poem.

This to ſoothe heaven the bloody Clephes built;
As if heaven's king ſo ſoft and eaſy were,

So

So meanly hous'd in heaven, and kind to guilt,
That he would be a tyrant's tenant here.

We have then a lively deſcription of a city morning; with the various and uncertain rumours of the late event, among the people. The reſt of the canto is employed in a debate, rather tedious, though intermixed with fine ſentiments, concerning the propriety of granting funeral rites to thoſe who had periſhed in the quarrel.

The progreſs of the fatal news is traced in the next canto. Aribert appears ſitting in council in all the regal dignity. Tybalt relates the ſtory. The king, in a majeſtic ſpeech, complains of the toils and cares of empire, and predicts the baneful conſequences likely to enſue. A more intereſting ſcene is then diſcloſed, in which Tybalt declares the melancholy events of the com-

bat

bat to Rhodalind and the other ladies of the court. Great art is ſhewn in the delicate ambiguity by which they are prepared to receive the tidings. Laura is overpowered by her loſs; and, calling on Arnold's name, is conveyed away by her female attendants. This tender ſcene of ſorrow is finely contraſted by the abrupt entrance of Gartha, in all the wild pomp of mingled rage and grief.

No ſooner was the pity'd Laura gone,
  But Oſwald's ſiſter, Gartha the renown'd,
Enters as if the world was overthrown,
  Or in the tears of the afflicted drown'd.

Unconquer'd as her beauty was her mind,
  Which wanted not a ſpark of Oſwald's fire;
Ambition lov'd, but ne'er to love was kind;
  Vex'd thrones did more than quiet ſhades deſire.

Her garments now in looſe neglect ſhe wore,
  As ſuited to her wild diſhevell'd hair.

In the fury of her paſſion ſhe breaks out into execrations againſt the innocent.

Blaſted be all your beauties, Rhodalind!
Till you a ſhame and terror be to ſight;
Unwing'd be Love, and ſlow as he is blind,
Who with your looks poiſon'd my brother's ſight!

At length ſhe mounts her chariot, and flies with the wings of revenge to the veteran camp at Breſcia. The terror impreſſed on the people by her haſty departure is imaged with great ſublimity.

She ſeem'd their city's Genius as ſhe paſs'd,
Who, by their ſins expell'd, would ne'er return.

The third canto brings us to Breſcia, where Hubert's arrival with the dead body of Oſwald excites every emotion of ſurprize, grief and fury in the breaſts of the brave veterans. They ſpend the night

in this ſtorm of contending paſſions; and at day-break aſſemble round the tent of Hubert, who by a noble harangue gives aditional fire to their revenge. They inſtantly arm, and demand to be led to Bergamo; when Gartha arrives. She turns their vengeance againſt the court, where ſhe repreſents the triumph of Gondibert's faction, and the diſhonour caſt upon their own. The rage diſcovered in her countenance, overpowering the ſymptoms of grief, is painted with amazing grandeur in the following ſimile:

The Sun did thus to threat'ned nature ſhow
His anger red, whilſt guilt look'd pale in all,
When clouds of floods did hang about his brow;
And then ſhrunk back to let that anger fall.

THIS tempeſt is, however, allayed in the next canto by the arrival of the wife Hermagild;

Hermegild; who, though grown aged in war and politics, is poſſeſſed with a youthful paſſion for Gartha. He ſolemnly binds his ſervices to their party, for the reward of Gartha's love; but perſuades them to ſubmit to more cautious and pacific meaſures. Gartha returns with him to the court; and the funeral of Oſwald with Roman rites, "Which yet the world's laſt law had not forbid," is deſcribed in the remaining part of the canto.

From ſcenes of rage and tumult the poet then leads us to the quiet ſhades of philoſophy in the houſe of Aſtragon. This change is not better calculated for the reader's relief, than for a diſplay of the richneſs and elevation of the writer's mind. That the friend of Hobbes ſhould deſpiſe the learned lumber of the ſchools will not be thought extraordinary; but that he ſhould diſtinctly mark out ſuch

plans of acquiring knowledge as have ſince been purſued with the greateſt ſucceſs, may well be deemed a remarkable proof of high and comprehenſive genius. In Aſtragon's domain is a retired building, upon which is written in large letters, GREAT NATURE'S OFFICE. Here ſit certain venerable ſages, ſtiled *Nature's Regiſters*, buſied in recording what is brought them by a throng called their *Intelligencers*. Theſe men are diverſly employed in exploring the haunts of beaſts, of birds, and of fiſhes, and collecting obſervations of their manners, their prey, their increaſe, and every circumſtance of their œconomy. Near this place is NATURE'S NURSERY, ſtocked with every ſpecies of plants, of which the ſeveral properties and virtues are diligently examined. Is it not ſtriking to find in the *houſe of Aſtragon* ſo exact a model of the *ſchool of Linnæus*?

WE are next led to the CABINET OF DEATH; a receptacle for ſkeletons and anatomical curioſities of every kind: and from thence, by a pleaſing analogy, to the library, or, as it is termed, the MONUMENT OF BANISH'D MINDS. The feelings of his gueſts on entering this room are thus deſcribed:

Where, when they thought they ſaw in well-fought books
  Th' aſſembled ſouls of all that men held wiſe,
It bred ſuch awful rev'rence in their looks
  As if they ſaw the bury'd writers riſe.

THE poet then goes through a particular ſurvey of the authors, diſtinguiſhed into their ſeveral periods, countries, and profeſſions; in which he exhibits a great extent of learning, and, much more to his honour, a ſound and liberal judgment of what is truly valuable in learning. Of this, his account of the polemic divines will be thought no unfavourable ſpecimen.

About this ſacred little book did ſtand
  Unwieldy volumes, and in number great;
And long it was ſince any reader's hand
  Had reach'd them from their unfrequented ſeat.

For a deep duſt (which time does ſoftly ſhed,
  Where only time does come) their covers bear;
On which grave ſpiders ſtreets of webs had ſpread,
  Subtle, and ſlight, as the grave writers were.

In theſe heaven's holy fire does vainly burn,
  Nor warms, nor lights, but is in ſparkles ſpent;
Where froward authors with diſputes have torn
  The garment ſeamleſs as the firmament.

If the ſubjects of this canto appear more noble and elevated than thoſe which uſually employ the epiſodes of heroic poetry, that of the enſuing one muſt ſtrike with ſtill ſuperior dignity. Having acquainted us with the philoſophy of his admired ſage, the poet now, by a beautiful kind of allegory, inſtructs us in his religion. Aſtragon had dedicated three temples, to PRAYER, to PENITENCE, and

to

TO PRAISE. The *Temple of Prayer* is deſcribed as a building quite plain, open, and without bells; ſince nothing ſhould tempt or ſummon to an office to which our own wants invite us. The duty of *Penitence* being a ſeverity unpleaſing to nature, its *temple* is contrived, by its ſolemn and uncommon appearance, to catch the ſenſe. It is a vaſt building of black marble, hung with black, and furniſhed with that "dim religious light" which poets have ſo finely employed to excite kindred ideas of gloom and melancholy: but none, I think, have painted it with ſuch ſtrength of colouring as our author:

Black curtains hide the glaſs; whilſt from on high
A winking lamp ſtill threatens all the room,
As if the lazy flame juſt now would die:
Such will the ſun's laſt light appear at doom.

A tolling bell calls to the temple; and

thing that diſtinguiſhes wit and poetry from plain ſenſe and proſe.

The wonders of the *houſe of Aſtragon* are not yet exhauſted.

To Aſtragon heaven for ſucceſſion gave
One only pledge, and BIRTHA was her name.

THIS maid, her father's humble diſciple and aſſiſtant, educated in the boſom of rural ſimplicity, is rendered a more charming object than even the renowned Rhodalind upon her throne,

Courts ſhe ne'er ſaw, yet courts could have undone
With untaught looks and an unpractis'd heart;
Her nets the moſt prepar'd could never ſhun,
For Nature ſpread them in the ſcorn of Art.

BUT I check my deſire of copying more from this exquiſitely pleaſing picture. My intention is to excite curioſity, not

not to gratify it. I hope I have already done enough for that purpoſe; and ſince the reſt of this unfiniſhed ſtory may be comprized in a ſhort compaſs, I ſhall proceed, with but few interruptions, to conclude a paper already ſwelled to an unexpected bulk.

THAT the unpractiſed Birtha ſhould entertain an unreſiſted paſſion for the nobleſt of his ſex; and that Gondibert, whoſe want of ambition alone had ſecured him from the charms of Rhodalind, ſhould bow to thoſe of his lovely hoſteſs and handmaid, will be thought a very natural turn in the ſtory; upon which, however, the reader may foreſee the moſt intereſting events depending. The progreſs of their love, though ſcarcely known to themſelves, is ſoon diſcovered by the ſage Aſtragon. This is expreſſed by the poet with a very fine turn of a common thought.

When

Her walks no ſpy has trac'd, nor mountain ſtaid;
Her friendſhip's cauſe is as the loadſtone hid.

He taught them love of Toil; Toil which does keep
Obſtructions from the mind, and quench the blood;
Eaſe but belongs to us like ſleep, and ſleep,
Like opium, is our med'cine, not our food.

THE plot is at length involved in ſo many intricate and apparently unſurmountable difficulties, that it is ſcarce poſſible to conceive a ſatisfactory termination. Perhaps the poet was ſenſible of a want of power to extricate himſelf, and choſe thus to ſubmit to a voluntary bankruptcy of invention, rather than hazard his reputation by going further. In his poſtſcript, indeed, he excuſes himſelf on account of ſickneſs and approaching diſſolution. However diſappointed we may be by his abrupt departure from ſcenes which he has filled with confuſion, we ought not to forget the pleaſures already

ready received from them. "If (ſays he to his reader, with more than the ſpirit of a dying man) thou art one of thoſe who has been warmed with poetic fire, I reverence thee as my judge." From ſuch a judicature, this NOBLE FRAGMENT, would, I doubt not, acquire for him what the critic laments his having loſt, "the poſſeſſion of that true and permanent glory of which his large ſoul appears to have been full *."

* Diſc. on Poetical Imitation.

AN

ENQUIRY

INTO THOSE KINDS OF

DISTRESS

WHICH EXCITE

AGREEABLE SENSATIONS.

IT is undoubtedly true, though a phænomenon of the human mind difficult to account for, that the repreſentation of diſtreſs frequently gives pleaſure; from which general obſervation many of our modern writers of tragedy and romance

mance ſeem to have drawn this inference, that in order to pleaſe, they have nothing more to do than to paint diſtreſs in natural and ſtriking colours. With this view, they heap together all the afflicting events and diſmal accidents their imagination can furniſh; and when they have half broke the reader's heart, they expect he ſhould thank them for his agreeable entertainment. An author of this claſs ſits down, pretty much like an inquiſitor, to compute how much ſuffering he can inflict upon the hero of his tale before he makes an end of him; with this difference, indeed, that the inquiſitor only tortures thoſe who are at leaſt reputed criminals; whereas the writer generally chooſes the moſt excellent character in his piece for the ſubject of his perſecution. The great criterion of excellence is placed in being able to draw tears plentifully; and con-

cluding we ſhall weep the more, the more the picture is loaded with doleful events, they go on, telling

——— of ſorrows upon ſorrows
Even to a lamentable length of woe.

A MONARCH once propoſed a reward for the diſcovery of a new pleaſure; but if any one could find out a new torture, or non-deſcript calamity, he would be more entitled to the applauſe of thoſe who fabricated books of entertainment.

BUT the ſprings of pity require to be touched with a more delicate hand; and it is far from being true that we are agreeably affected by every thing that excites our ſympathy. It ſhall therefore be the buſineſs of this eſſay to diſtinguiſh thoſe kinds of diſtreſs which are pleaſing in the repre-

repreſentation, from thoſe which are really painful and diſguſting.

THE view or relation of mere miſery can never be pleaſing. We have, indeed, a ſtrong ſympathy with all kinds of miſery; but it is a feeling of pure unmixed pain, ſimilar in kind, though not equal in degree, to what we feel for ourſelves on the like occaſions; and never produces that melting ſorrow, that thrill of tenderneſs, to which we give the name of pity. They are two diſtinct ſenſations, marked by very different external expreſſion. One cauſes the nerves to tingle, the fleſh to ſhudder, and the whole countenance to be thrown into ſtrong contractions; the other relaxes the frame, opens the features, and produces tears. When we cruſh a noxious or loathſome animal, we may ſympathize ſtrongly with the pain it ſuffers, but with far different

emotions from the tender ſentiment we feel for the dog of Ulyſſes, who crawled to meet his long-loſt maſter, looked up, and died at his feet. Extreme bodily pain is perhaps the moſt intenſe ſuffering we are capable of, and if the fellow-feeling with miſery alone was grateful to the mind, the exhibition of a man in a fit of the tooth-ach, or under a chirurgical operation, would have a fine effect in a tragedy. But there muſt be ſome other ſentiment combined with this kind of inſtinctive ſympathy, before it becomes in any degree pleaſing, or produces the ſweet emotion of pity. This ſentiment is love, eſteem, the complacency we take in the contemplation of beauty, of mental or moral excellence, called forth and rendered more intereſting, by circumſtances of pain and danger. Tenderneſs is, much more properly than ſorrow, the ſpring of tears; for it affects us in that manner,

manner, whether combined with joy or grief; perhaps more in the former caſe than the latter. And I believe we may venture to aſſert, that no diſtreſs which produces tears is wholly without a mixture of pleaſure. When Joſeph's brethren were ſent to buy corn, if they had periſhed in the deſart by wild beaſts, or been reduced (as in the horrid adventures of a Pierre de Vaud) to eat one another, we might have ſhuddered, but we ſhould not have wept for them. The guſh of tears breaks forth when Joſeph made himſelf known to his brethren, and fell on their neck, and kiſſed them. When Hubert prepares to burn out prince Arthur's eyes, the ſhocking circumſtance, of itſelf, would only affect us with horror; it is the amiable ſimplicity of the young prince, and his innocent affection to his intended murderer, that draws our tears, and excites that tender ſorrow which we

love to feel, and which refines the heart while we do feel it.

We ſee, therefore, from this view of our internal feelings, that no ſcenes of miſery ought to be exhibited which are not connected with the diſplay of ſome moral excellence, or agreeable quality. If fortitude, power, and ſtrength of mind are called forth, they produce the ſublime feelings of wonder and admiration: if the ſofter qualities of gentleneſs, grace, and beauty, they inſpire love and pity. The management of theſe latter emotions is our preſent object.

And let it be remembered, in the firſt place, that the misfortunes which excite pity muſt not be too horrid and overwhelming. The mind is rather ſtunned than ſoftened by great calamities. They are little circumſtances that work moſt ſenſibly

ſenſibly upon the tender feelings. For this reaſon, a well-written novel generally draws more tears than a tragedy. The diſtreſſes of tragedy are more calculated to amaze and terrify, than to move compaſſion. Battles, torture and death are in every page. The dignity of the characters, the importance of the events, the pomp of verſe and imagery intereſt the grander paſſions, and raiſe the mind to an enthuſiaſm little favourable to the weak and languid notes of pity. The tragedies of Young are in a fine ſtrain of poetry, and the ſituations are worked up with great energy; but the pictures are in too deep a ſhade: all his pieces are full of violent and gloomy paſſions, and ſo over-wrought with horror, that inſtead of awakening any pleaſing ſenſibility, they leave on the mind an impreſſion of ſadneſs mixed with terror. Shakeſpeare is ſometimes guilty of preſenting ſcenes too

ſhocking. Such is the trampling out of Gloſter's eyes; and ſuch is the whole play of Titus Andronicus. But Lee, beyond all others, abounds with this kind of images. He delighted in painting the moſt daring crimes, and cruel maſſacres; and though he has ſhewn himſelf extremely capable of raiſing tenderneſs, he continually checks its courſe by ſhocking and diſagreeable expreſſions. His pieces are in the ſame taſte with the pictures of Spagnolet, and there are many ſcenes in his tragedies which no one can reliſh who would not look with pleaſure on the flaying of St. Bartholomew. The following ſpeech of Marguerite, in the maſſacre of Paris, was, I ſuppoſe, intended to expreſs the utmoſt tenderneſs of affection.

Die for him! that's too little; I could burn
Piece-meal away, or bleed to death by drops,
Be flay'd alive, then broke upon the wheel,
Yet with a ſmile endure it all for Guiſe:

And

And when let looſe from torments, all one wound,
Run with my mangled arms and cruſh him dead.

IMAGES like theſe will never excite the ſofter paſſions. We are leſs moved at the deſcription of an Indian tortured with all the dreadful ingenuity of that ſavage people, than with the fatal miſtake of the lover in the Spectator, who pierced an artery in the arm of his miſtreſs as he was letting her blood. Tragedy and romance-writers are likewiſe apt to make too free with the more violent expreſſions of paſſion and diſtreſs, by which means they loſe their effect. Thus an ordinary author does not know how to expreſs any ſtrong emotion otherwiſe than by ſwoonings or death; ſo that a perſon experienced in this kind of reading, when a girl faints away at parting with her lover, or a hero kills himſelf for the loſs of his miſtreſs, conſiders it as the eſtabliſhed

etiquette upon ſuch occaſions, and turns over the pages with the utmoſt coolneſs and unconcern; whereas real ſenſibility, and a more intimate knowledge of human nature, would have ſuggeſted a thouſand little touches of grief, which though ſlight, are irreſiſtible. We are too gloomy a people. Some of the French novels are remarkable for little affecting incidents, imagined with delicacy, and told with grace. Perhaps they have a better turn than we have for this kind of writing.

A JUDICIOUS author will never attempt to raiſe pity by any thing mean or diſguſting. As we have already obſerved, there muſt be a degree of complacence mixed with our ſorrows to produce an agreeable ſympathy; nothing, therefore, muſt be admitted which deſtroys the grace and dignity of ſuffering; the imagination muſt have an amiable figure to dwell

dwell upon; there are circumſtances ſo ludicrous or diſguſting, that no character can preſerve a proper decorum under them, or appear in an agreeable light. Who can read the following deſcription of Polypheme without finding his compaſſion entirely deſtroyed by averſion and loathing?

——————— His bloody hand
Snatch'd two unhappy of my martial band,
And daſh'd like dogs againſt the ſtony floor,
The pavement ſwims with brains and mingled gore;
Torn limb from limb, he ſpreads his horrid feaſt,
And fierce devours it like a mountain beaſt,
He ſucks the marrow, and the blood he drains,
Nor entrails, fleſh, nor ſolid bone remains.

Or that of Scylla,

In the wide dungeon ſhe devours her food,
And the fleſh trembles while ſhe churns the blood.

Deformity is always diſguſting, and the imagination cannot reconcile it with the idea of a favourite character; therefore the poet and romance-writer are fully juſtified in giving a larger ſhare of beauty to their principal figures than is uſually met with in common life. A late genius, indeed, in a whimſical mood, gave us a lady with her noſe cruſhed for the heroine of his ſtory; but the circumſtance ſpoils the picture; and though in the courſe of the ſtory it is kept a good deal out of ſight, whenever it does recur to the imagination we are hurt and diſguſted. It was an heroic inſtance of virtue in the nuns of a certain abbey, who cut off their noſes and lips to avoid violation; yet this would make a very bad ſubject for a poem or a play. Something akin to this is the repreſentation of any thing unnatural; of which kind is the famous ſtory of the Roman charity, and

for

for this reaſon I cannot but think it an unpleaſing ſubject for either the pen or the pencil.

POVERTY, if truly repreſented, ſhocks our nicer feelings; therefore, whenever it is made uſe of to awaken our compaſſion, the rags and dirt, the ſqualid appearance and mean employments incident to that ſtate muſt be kept out of ſight, and the diſtreſs muſt ariſe from the idea of depreſſion, and the ſhock of falling from higher fortunes. We do not pity Beliſarius as a poor blind beggar; and a painter would ſucceed very ill who ſhould ſink him to the meanneſs of that condition. He muſt let us ſtill diſcover the conqueror of the Vandals, the general of the imperial armies, or we ſhall be little intereſted. Let us look at the picture of the old woman in Otway:

——A

——A wrinkled hag with age grown double,
Picking dry ſticks, and muttering to herſelf;
Her eyes with ſcalding rheum were gall'd and red;
Cold palſie ſhook her head; her hands ſeem'd wither'd;
And on her crooked ſhoulder had ſhe wrapt
The tatter'd remnant of an old ſtrip'd hanging,
Which ſerv'd to keep her carcaſe from the cold;
So there was nothing of a piece about her.

Here is the extreme of wretchedneſs, and inſtead of melting into pity, we ſhould turn away with diſguſt, if we were not pleaſed with it, as we are with a Dutch painting, from its exact imitation of nature. Indeed the author only intended it to ſtrike horror. But how different are the ſentiments we feel for the lovely Belvidera! We ſee none of thoſe circumſtances which render poverty an unamiable thing. When the goods are ſeized by an execution, our attention is turned to *the piles of maſſy plate, and all the ancient, moſt domeſtic ornaments*, which imply grandeur and conſequence; or to ſuch inſtances of their

their hard fortune as will ſcarce allow us to pity them as lovers: we are ſhocked and diſguſted with the general face of ruin, but we can not bring near enough to diſcern the uglineſs of its features. Penſive ſweet, Belvidera deprived of friends, of fortune, of home, abandoned to the wide world, we can contemplate with all the pleaſing ſympathy of pity; but had ſhe been repreſented as really ſunk into low life, had we ſeen her employed in the moſt ſervile offices of poverty, our conſideration would have given way to contempt and diſguſt. Indeed, we may obſerve in real life, that poverty is only pitied by thoſe people can keep themſelves from the effects of it. When in common language we ſay a *miſerable object*, we mean an object of diſtreſs which, if we relieve, we turn away from at the ſame time. To make pity pleaſing, the object of it muſt not in any view be diſagreeable to the imagination.

tion. How admirably has the author of Clariſſa managed this point? Amidſt ſcenes of ſuffering which rend the heart, in poverty, in a priſon, under the moſt ſhocking outrages, the grace and delicacy of her character never ſuffers even for a moment; there ſeems to be a charm about her which prevents her receiving a ſtain from any thing which happens, and Clariſſa, abandoned and undone, is the object not only of complacence, but veneration.

I would likewiſe obſerve, that if an author would have us feel a ſtrong degree of compaſſion, his characters muſt not be too perfect. The ſtern fortitude and inflexible reſolution of a Cato may command eſteem, but does not excite tenderneſs; and faultleſs rectitude of conduct, though no rigour be mixed with it, is of too ſublime a nature to inſpire com-

compaſſion. Virtue has a kind of ſelf-ſufficiency; it ſtands upon its own baſis, and cannot be injured by any violence. It muſt therefore be mixed with ſomething of helpleſſneſs and imperfection, with an exceſſive ſenſibility, or a ſimplicity bordering upon weakneſs, before it raiſes, in any great degree, either tenderneſs or familiar love. If there be a fault in the maſterly performance juſt now mentioned, it is that the character of Clariſſa is ſo inflexibly right, her paſſions are under ſuch perfect command, and her prudence is ſo equal to every occaſion, that ſhe ſeems not to need that ſympathy we ſhould beſtow upon one of a leſs elevated character; and perhaps we ſhould feel a livelier emotion of tenderneſs for the innocent girl whom Lovelace calls his Roſe-bud, but that the ſtory of Clariſſa is ſo worked up by the ſtrength of colouring, and the force of repeated impreſſions, as to command all our ſorrow.

PITY

PITY ſeems too degrading a ſentiment to be offered at the ſhrine of faultleſs excellence. The ſufferings of martyrs are rather beheld with admiration and ſympathetic triumph than with tears; and we never feel much for thoſe whom we conſider as themſelves raiſed above common feelings.

THE laſt rule I ſhall inſiſt upon is, that ſcenes of diſtreſs ſhould not be too long continued. All our finer feelings are in a manner momentary, and no art can carry them beyond a certain point, either in intenſeneſs or duration. Conſtant ſuffering deadens the heart to tender impreſſions; as we may obſerve in ſailors, and others who are grown callous by a life of continual hardſhips. It is therefore highly neceſſary, in a long work, to relieve the mind by ſcenes of pleaſure and gaiety; and I cannot think it ſo abſurd

ſurd a practice as our modern delicacy has repreſented it, to intermix wit and fancy with the pathetic, provided care be taken not to check the paſſions while they are flowing. The tranſition from a pleaſurable ſtate of mind to tender ſorrow is not ſo difficult as we imagine. When the mind is opened by gay and agreeable ſcenes, every impreſſion is felt more ſenſibly. Perſons of a lively temper are much more ſuſceptible of that ſudden ſwell of ſenſibility which occaſions tears, than thoſe of a grave and ſaturnine caſt: for this reaſon women are more eaſily moved to weeping than men. Thoſe who have touched the ſprings of pity with the fineſt hand, have mingled light ſtrokes of pleaſantry and mirth in their moſt pathetic paſſages. Very different is the conduct of many novel-writers, who, by plunging us into ſcenes of diſtreſs without end or limit, exhauſt the powers,

and before the concluſion either render us inſenſible to every thing, or fix a real ſadneſs upon the mind. The uniform ſtile of tragedies is one reaſon why they affect ſo little. In our old plays, all the force of language is reſerved for the more intereſting parts; and in the ſcenes of common life there is no attempt to riſe above common language: whereas we, by that pompous manner and affected ſolemnity which we think it neceſſary to preſerve through the whole piece, loſe the force of an elevated or paſſionate expreſſion where the occaſion really ſuggeſts it.

HAVING thus conſidered the manner in which fictitious diſtreſs muſt be managed to render it pleaſing, let us reflect a little upon the moral tendency of ſuch repreſentations. Much has been ſaid in favour of them, and they are generally thought

thought to improve the tender and humane feelings; but this, I own, appears to me very dubious. That they exerciſe ſenſibility, is true; but ſenſibility does not increaſe with exerciſe. By the conſtitution of our frame our habits increaſe, our emotions decreaſe, by repeated acts; and thus a wiſe proviſion is made, that as our compaſſion grows weaker, its place ſhould be ſupplied by habitual benevolence. But in theſe writings our ſenſibility is ſtrongly called forth without any poſſibility of exerting itſelf in virtuous action, and thoſe emotions, which we ſhall never feel again with equal force, are waſted without advantage. Nothing is more dangerous than to let virtuous impreſſions of any kind paſs through the mind without producing their proper effect. The awakenings of remorſe, virtuous ſhame and indignation, the glow of moral approbation—if they do not lead to action, grow

leſs and leſs vivid every time they recur, till at length the mind grows abſolutely callous. The being affected with a pathetic ſtory is undoubtedly a ſign of an amiable diſpoſition, but perhaps no means of increaſing it. On the contrary, young people, by a courſe of this kind of reading, often acquire ſomething of that apathy and indifference which the experience of real life would have given them, without its advantages.

ANOTHER reaſon why plays and romances do not improve our humanity is, that they lead us to require a certain elegance of manners and delicacy of virtue which is not often found with poverty, ignorance and meanneſs. The objects of pity in romance are as different from thoſe in real life as our huſbandmen from the ſhepherds of Arcadia; and a girl who will ſit weeping the whole night at the

the delicate diſtreſſes of a lady Charlotte, or lady Julia, ſhall be little moved at the complaint of her neighbour, who, in a homely phraſe and vulgar accent, laments to her that ſhe is not able to get bread for her family. Romance-writers likewiſe make great misfortunes ſo familiar to our ears, that we have hardly any pity to ſpare for the common accidents of life; but we ought to remember, that miſery has a claim to relief, however we may be diſguſted with its appearance; and that we muſt not fancy ourſelves charitable, when we are only pleaſing our imagination.

It would perhaps be better, if our romances were more like thoſe of the old ſtamp, which tended to raiſe human nature, and inſpire a certain grace and dignity of manners of which we have hardly the idea. The high notions of

honour, the wild and fanciful ſpirit of adventure and romantic love, elevated the mind; our novels tend to depreſs and enfeeble it. Yet there is a ſpecies of this kind of writing which muſt ever afford an exquiſite pleaſure to perſons of taſte and ſenſibility; where noble ſentiments are mixed with well-fancied incidents, pathetic touches with dignity and grace, and invention with chaſte correctneſs. Such will ever intereſt our ſweeteſt paſſions. I ſhall conclude this paper with the following tale.

IN

IN the happy period of the golden age, when all the celeſtial inhabitants deſcended to the earth, and converſed familiarly with mortals, among the moſt cheriſhed of the heavenly powers were twins, the offspring of Jupiter, LOVE and JOY. Where they appeared, the flowers ſprung up beneath their feet, the ſun ſhone with a brighter radiance, and all nature ſeemed embelliſhed by their preſence. They were inſeparable companions, and their growing attachment was favoured by Jupiter, who had decreed that a laſting union ſhould be ſolemnized between them as ſoon

as they were arrived at maturer years. But in the mean time the ſons of men deviated from their native innocence; vice and ruin over-ran the earth with giant ſtrides; and Aſtrea, with her train of celeſtial viſitants, forſook their polluted abodes. Love alone remained, having been ſtolen away by Hope, who was his nurſe, and conveyed by her to the foreſts of Arcadia, where he was brought up among the ſhepherds. But Jupiter aſſigned him a different partner, and commanded him to eſpouſe SORROW, the daughter of Até. He complied with reluctance; for her features were harſh and diſagreeable, her eyes ſunk, her forehead contracted into perpetual wrinkles, and her temples were covered with a wreath of cypreſs and wormwood. From this union ſprung a virgin, in whom might be traced a ſtrong reſemblance to both her parents; but

but the ſullen and unamiable features of her mother were ſo mixed and blended with the ſweetneſs of her father, that her countenance, though mournful, was highly pleaſing. The maids and ſhepherds of the neighbouring plains gathered round, and called her PITY. A red-breaſt was obſerved to build in the cabin where ſhe was born; and while ſhe was yet an infant, a dove, purſued by a hawk, flew into her boſom. This nymph had a dejected appearance, but ſo ſoft and gentle a mien that ſhe was beloved to a degree of enthuſiaſm. Her voice was low and plaintive, but inexpreſſibly ſweet; and ſhe loved to lie for hours together on the banks of ſome wild and melancholy ſtream, ſinging to her lute. She taught men to weep, for ſhe took a ſtrange delight in tears; and often, when the virgins of the hamlet were aſſembled at their evening ſports, ſhe

ſhe would ſteal in amongſt them, and captivate their hearts by her tales full of a charming ſadneſs. She wore on her head a garland compoſed of her father's myrtles twiſted with her mother's cypreſs.

One day, as ſhe ſat muſing by the waters of Helicon, her tears by chance fell into the fountain; and ever ſince, the Muſes' ſpring has retained a ſtrong taſte of the infuſion. Pity was commanded by Jupiter to follow the ſteps of her mother through the world, dropping balm into the wounds ſhe made, and binding up the hearts ſhe had broken. She follows with her hair looſe, her boſom bare and throbbing, her garments torn by the briars, and her feet bleeding with the roughneſs of the path. The nymph is mortal, for her mother is ſo; and when ſhe has fulfilled her deſtined

deſtined courſe upon the earth, they ſhall both expire together, and LOVE be again united to JOY, his immortal and long betrothed bride.

THE END.